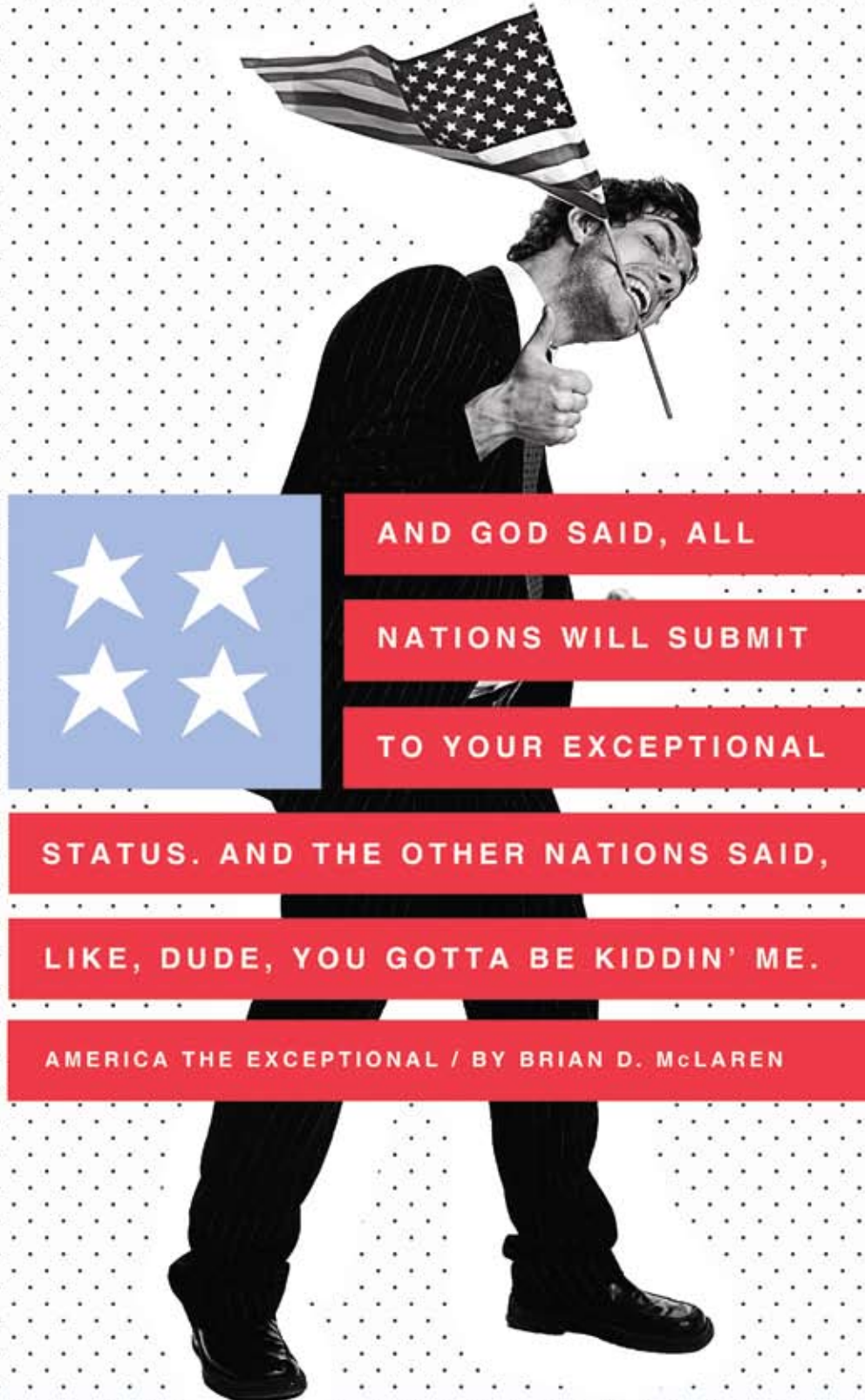


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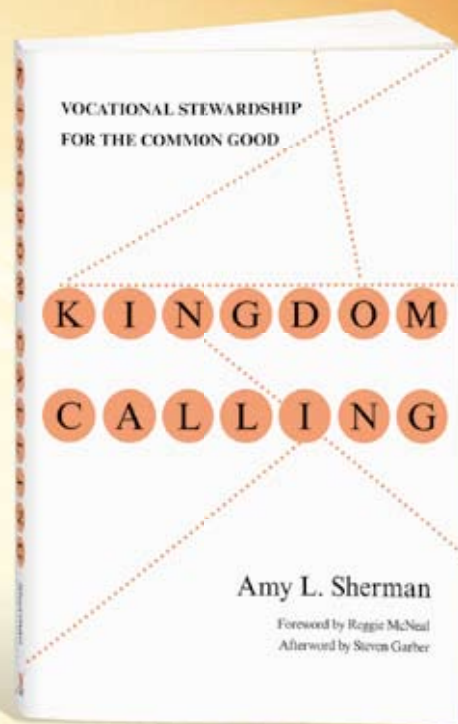
Kingdom Calling

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AUTHORS OFFER MANY reasons why they're late on a deadline, but this issue we heard what may be the most impressive one yet from writer Denali DeGraf.

DeGraf has long and deep connections to Sojourners. His father, Scot, was our circulation director for many years, his mother, Linda, worked in our art department, and the family was part of our extended community when Denali was born. (Denali has written for us once before: As a high school freshman in 1995, he reviewed the card game *Magic: The Gathering*.) When Denali was a student at Stanford, he traveled to Santiago, Chile, as part of the university's overseas studies program. While there he visited the Patagonia region of Argentina, fell in love with the place, and has lived there for most of the years since.



This summer, as he was approaching a deadline on his article on indigenous efforts to resist open-pit mining in the region, Denali was required to travel back to Chile to take care of some immigration paperwork. His usual passage across the Andes was blocked by the eruption of the Puyehue-Cordón Caulle volcano in June, extending his trip and making it difficult to get his article done

by the assigned time. We're pretty sure this is the first time we've heard the "volcano ate my homework" excuse. (We would have been less impressed with his originality if he had waited until this fall and used the arrival of his newborn daughter, Anjali, as a rationale for delay—that one we've heard before!)

We're glad Denali was able to overcome obstacles, natural and otherwise, to tell the important story of a community rising up to meet grave threats to their environment, and the role that people of faith are playing in those efforts. Such stories give us a glimpse of the often-latent strength inherent in seemingly outmatched communities and help us understand the power waiting to be unleashed by people coming together in common cause. ■

Letters

VIOLENT MOVIE

Bill Wylie-Kellermann's "Harry and the Principalities" (November 2011) gave voice to my family's deep disappointment with the final Harry Potter movie. We had looked forward to the movie for months, but emerged in shock at how the ending completely missed the point! My 14-year-old son simply shook his head in disbelief. Thank you for this article; it helped a teenage boy, who knows in his gut that redemptive violence is a myth, find affirmation for his budding commitment to nonviolence.

Kelly Keller
Omaha, Nebraska

FEEL THE LOVE?

I found Tom Getman's article "Holy Land Farce" (November 2011) to be very one-sided in its perception of Glenn Beck's Rally to Restore Courage in August. I am a Jewish person, almost 62 years old, who became a Christian when I was 50. I have always been more liberal than conservative, but I must say that as I watched Glenn Beck and Pastor Hagee, I felt understood, supported—and, yes, loved.

While some are telling me that protecting Israel is not very important to my fellow U.S. citizens, evangelical Christians are telling me that they understand Israel's plight as a nation surrounded by Muslim

"Housing is clearly a priority, yet it is community that must come first."

countries that are hostile to her existence and have felt that way for almost 100 years now. This hatred and violence existed long before Israel took over the West Bank, so please don't blame Israel for Muslim attitudes of hatred and destructiveness.

Debra Michels
Marina del Rey, California

FIRST THINGS

Re: "Compassion That Works" (by Toya Richards, November 2011): I am not convinced that the Housing First model, which assumes that the reason people are homeless is because they don't have homes, is more humane than community shelters. People are homeless because they have lost something that is important to them. The loss of a home is secondary to the deeper loss: of a livelihood, a child, a spouse, a dream, sobriety, sanity, perspective, love.

As a result of grief, an individual becomes isolated. The Housing First fast track to independence may be detrimental for a person who needs intensive daily support. Moreover, humans are social beings; we make sense of our lives in a relational context. Each of us

needs the opportunity to engage collectively and to serve.

At the homeless shelter where I work, I see manifestations of Jesus every day. I see Jesus the healer serving the hungry in our kitchen. I see Jesus the rabble-rouser exposing poverty to those in positions of privilege. I see Jesus the sufferer bleeding on a cross in The Place of the Skull under the bridge or near the river.

Itinerant, communal, or transitional living is not for everyone although, during his three years of ministry, it was Jesus' life. Shelters play a vital role in reducing the isolation and marginalization of a vulnerable population. The Housing First model may be all the rage among housing providers and advocates, but it is lacking something hugely significant. Housing is clearly a priority, yet it is community that must come first.

Marie Marchand
Bellingham, Washington

Letters, *Sojourners*, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010 or letters@sojo.net. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.

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Sojourners (ISSN 0364-2097) is published monthly, except
 September-October is combined, at 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200,
 Washington, DC 20010. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C.,
 and additional mailing offices. Canadian Publications Sales Agreement
 #257494. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sojourners,
 PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

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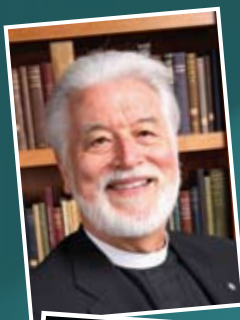
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BY JIM WALLIS

Iraq: It's Finally Over—and It Was Wrong



MY SON JACK was born just days before the war in Iraq began. So for these last nearly nine years, it's been easy for me to remember how long this horrible conflict has been going on. Finally, as President Obama announced, the American war will soon be over, with most of the 44,000 American troops still in Iraq coming home in time to be with their families for Christmas.

The initial feelings that rushed over me after hearing the White House announcement were of deep relief. But then they turned to deep sadness over the terrible cost of a war that was, from the beginning, wrong—intellectually, politically, strategically, and, above all, morally wrong.

The war in Iraq was fundamentally a war of choice, and it was the wrong choice. From the outset, this war was fought on false pretenses,

weapons of mass destruction. Many believed it at the time, and an invasion was mounted on what turned out to be false information. A decade of sanctions and United Nations inspections had already undermined the allegations. And in the almost nine years of war, not a single WMD has been found in Iraq.

The invasion began with triumphal claims that it would be a “cakewalk” and that U.S. forces would be welcomed as “liberators.” That proved to be initially true with the unexpectedly easy removal of Saddam Hussein from power, which led to the famous claim of a flight-jacket-clad George W. Bush on a U.S. aircraft carrier six weeks after the invasion began: “Mission Accomplished!”

But then everything fell apart. Hussein's fighters had not surrendered, but simply melted into the cities, lying in wait to fight again. Al Qaeda, which had existed largely only in Afghanistan, formed an Iraqi branch. An invasion turned into an occupation and nearly five years of vicious and deadly street warfare, sectarian violence, and constant terrorist bombings. By the time the heaviest fighting had died down, the Iraqi people were bitterly divided, huge parts of their country had been devastated, and corruption and fraud were rampant.

The costs of this unjust war have been enormous:

- More than 4,483 U.S. military killed and 32,200 wounded.
- 110,000 estimated Iraqi civilian deaths.
- 2.5 million internally displaced Iraqis.
- More than half a million U.S. troops returning with post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injuries.
- \$800 billion in federal funding for

the war through FY2011.

- An estimated total cost of \$3 trillion to \$5 trillion.
- Nearly 1,000 suicide attempts by veterans per month.

Such a list takes my breath away and should drive each of us to prayer for lives that have been so painfully and irreparably changed.

As U.S. combat troops return home, they leave behind a badly damaged nation that will require years, if not decades, of assistance and humanitarian development. Our responsibility does not end simply because our military presence in Iraq has. Clearly, religious communities must reach out to returning veterans to make sure they have the physical, emotional, and spiritual support they need. One of the most unjust aspects of an unjust war is that a small minority of Americans have borne the brunt of the impact and cost of this war—and in our volunteer army, those were disproportionately lower-income families. Despite the fact that this has been a tragically mistaken war, the sacrifices made by many soldiers have been extraordinary. Even in the midst of war's brutalities, there were many acts of real heroism—soldiers risking and giving their own lives for their fellow soldiers and for the lives of Iraqis, who also paid a heavy price. No matter what our view of the war, it is our collective responsibility to be healers for those who are coming home—and for those left behind in post-war Iraq.

We must learn from this horrible and costly mistake. We must conclude unequivocally that terrorism is not defeated by wars of mass occupation. And we must strive to re-establish the fundamental principle that truth matters. ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners.

The costs of this unjust war have been enormous.

with false information, and for false purposes. And the official decisions to argue for this war and then to carry it out represented the height of political and moral irresponsibility—especially when we see the failed results and consider both the human and financial costs.

Saddam Hussein and Iraq had nothing to do with the attacks on 9/11, as was falsely implied, and had no weapons of mass destruction, as was falsely claimed and endlessly repeated. The intelligence on Iraq was manipulated and distorted to justify going to war. This was clearly a war of choice and a war that was painfully unnecessary. We were misled into war and, so far, nobody has been held accountable for it.

The war was sold to the American public with the claim that Iraq had



Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth

By Rep. John Lewis

Fearless for Justice

REV. FRED SHUTTLESWORTH, who passed on in October, was a fearless, determined, courageous leader for civil rights and social justice. When others did not have the courage to speak out, Shuttlesworth put all he had on the line to end segregation. He was beaten with chains, his church was bombed, and he lived under constant threat of violence and murder. It was Shuttlesworth who stood with Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph Abernathy at the First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, on the night of May 21, 1961, to rally the audience in support of the Freedom Rides—and who stayed with us all night while an angry mob surrounded the church and threatened to burn it down. Bombs were set off so frequently in Birmingham during the 1950s and '60s that people called the city "Bombingham." It did not matter. Where others shook in fear, Fred Shuttlesworth took action.

All of us—every American, as well as all those around the world who have used the civil rights movement as a template for their own struggles for change—owe Shuttlesworth a heavy debt of gratitude for his willingness to give all he had to help build a more just society.

Rep. John Lewis, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, was chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and a leader in the civil rights movement.

By Lisa Sharon Harper

A Turning Point on Immigration?

A conference at Cedarville University shows new political boundary-crossing in the Christian college world.

"WHAT A MOMENT you have brought me to," belted a massive gospel choir of nearly 100 mostly white students and faculty at Cedarville University's G92 Immigration Conference in Ohio in October. Led by several African-American and white students and staff, the choir swayed, clapped, and worshipped, pressing through years of tradition, partisan loyalties, and cultural isolation.

Founded 125 years ago, Cedarville is rooted in a fundamentalist worldview, which is not generally associated with justice efforts in the social sphere. Carl Ruby, Cedarville's vice president for student life, said in a recent interview: "I grew up hearing about the dangers of the 'social gospel.' The social gospel was always presented as something antithetical to sharing the need for personal

salvation. I don't view it that way anymore. In fact, I think if we approach issues of social justice appropriately, it lends credibility to the gospel message that we want to share. I

It's a new day on conservative campuses, and maybe even in evangelical America.

think we need to *both* tell the gospel *and* do the gospel."

At Cedarville, according to Ruby, a transformation was sparked for faculty and students by the 2007 book *UnChristian*, by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons. "They outlined the way that people outside of the church tend to view, particularly,

conservative evangelicals as being pushy, hateful, disconnected from issues that matter, backward culturally," Ruby explained. "I want to see us change those perceptions by providing solutions to real-life problems."

The following year, Ruby tried to bring Shane Claiborne, cofounder of The Simple Way community and author of *The Irresistible Revolution*, to campus to lecture. The backlash from bloggers and alumni was so great that Ruby canceled the event.

Since 2007, Cedarville students, faculty, and alumni have been on a journey. After much dialogue, this fall the university brought together people from 20 Christian

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Newsstand Circulation

Newsstand circulation through Disticor Magazine Distribution Services.
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colleges and universities for the G92 Immigration Conference—whose website endorsed immigration reform that, among other things, “establishes a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents.” (According to the organizers, G92 is a reference to the 92 times that the Hebrew word *ger*—which is translated as stranger, sojourner, or alien—occurs in scripture.)

Ruby didn’t know what to expect as the date of G92 approached, but on that first night it was clear it’s a new day at Cedarville—and maybe even in evangelical America.

Speaker after speaker shared from the heart, preached from the Bible, and sifted fact from fiction. Carlos Campos, president of Pat Robertson-founded Regent University, talked

about learning to embrace his identity as a son of Cuban immigrants. Sojourners’ Jim Wallis told the crowd, “There are two signs at the border: One says ‘No Trespassing’; the other says ‘Help Wanted’! Now 12 million people, made in the image of God, are stuck between these two signs. What are we going to do about it?” Claiborne—yes, the speaker disinvited by Cedarville a few years earlier—spoke at the conference about what he called the dreams, hearts, and humanity of “the other.”

And get this: G92 is now slated to be an annual conference hosted by a different Christian college each year. ■

Lisa Sharon Harper, director of mobilizing at Sojourners, was a speaker at the G92 conference. She is also co-author of Left, Right, and Christ: Evangelical Faith in Politics.

By Richard Oswald

Grassroots on the Farm

Populism sprouts again among many family farmers.

DESPITE DECLINING populations, rural America still has plenty of opinions. They’re out there, plentiful and ripe as new potatoes—all it takes is some digging.

In the old days, agrarians held the pot and populists stirred. Rural populations made up the nation’s majority. But we’ve lost ground: Today’s grassroots minority are seen by corporations as one cook too many, spoiling the company stew.

Farm subsidies encompass five major crops: corn, soybeans, wheat, rice, and cotton. In the 1930s, populist farmers supported subsidies in FDR’s New Deal because they kept farmers on the farm. It was the easiest fix. But farm bills of old were aimed at average farmers: a husband and wife raising a family on the land. It was about average incomes, average acres. Average farmers grew both crops and livestock. When grains were cheap, average farmers converted them to meat, milk, and eggs. If prices for those dropped, family farmers cut back.

Everything was about supply and demand—life and survival. Nothing was about making a killing on food.

All that began to change as corporate agriculture promoted grain exports, and companies such as Continental Grain began to raise their own livestock—a precursor to packer-owned livestock, contract



Getty Images

production, and packer-controlled livestock markets.

In the 1970s, populist farmers came to be viewed as radicals when they protested anti-family-farm policy by driving tractors to Washington, D.C. They lost the public opinion battle as tractors rutted the National Mall when the government blocked them in with garbage trucks and buses. Some farmers camped there all winter. News coverage

From the Archives

January 1976

Living Churches

IN RECENT years a great many Christians, disturbed by the absence of a vital witness to Christ in his churches, have prayed something to the effect, "Lord, revive thy church beginning with me." A good intention—and a prayer that probably stimulates genuine religious sentiment among God's people; but as it is, there lie beneath its surface some misleading assumptions about the nature of the church and the renewal it needs today ...

Unfortunately the great majority of Christian congregations see themselves with no more specific social mission than this; and in theory, therefore, personal conversion revivals seem to be enough to keep the machinery going year after year. But I, for one, seriously challenge the assumption that by increasing the number of fervently witnessing members (either by reviving the old or converting some new ones) a church will find renewal and approach more fully its true calling in Christ.

As I understand the New Testament vision of the church, witnessing lay people could never alone make living churches.

In fact, after several recent decades during which this sort of individual thrust as an approach to church renewal has been pursued, the church is now generally worse off (structurally, numerically, financially—even morally) than it was 30 years ago; and the surrounding world societies which it is meant to influence have been practically untouched by it. ■

Graham Pulkingham was a contributing editor to Sojourners and a leader of the Community of Celebration in Scotland when this article appeared.



failed to note that, come spring, the farmers smoothed and reseeded the Mall before they left.

With succeeding generations more removed from their rural roots, U.S. farm policies began rewarding large farms and cor-

implementing GIPSA rules, even though it had said they were a priority.

Family farm success is measured in terms of growing seasons and succeeding generations. As corporations increase their domination over the worldwide food supply,

Corporate tactics are making things more and more difficult for small farmers.

porate America. The anti-populist 1996 Farm Bill is responsible for higher land costs and the consolidation of farms because it allowed practically unlimited subsidized profits: A few big farmers could make a killing. That's what corporations want most, because it gives them a plentiful supply of cheap raw commodities they can refine into food.

In contrast, new rules proposed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) would stop meat-packer monopolies from shifting fair markets for livestock—markets in which it is possible for family farmers to compete—to corporate-dominated contract production. Thousands of grassroots populists commented in favor of such rules during hearings in 2010. Now the Obama administration has delayed

their success is measured by consolidation and control, and their tactics are making things more difficult for small farmers, especially those just starting out. Today's average U.S. farmer is 57 years old. Young beginning farmers are scarce as hen's teeth.

With food-borne illness on the rise, do corporate ends, focused on maximizing profits, justify the means? What's at issue isn't only the cost of corporate monopolies in terms of price and profits, but also transparency and food ethics. Corporations are winning.

That's why America's ethical family farm populists are struggling not to die on the vine. ■

Richard Oswald is president of the Missouri Farmers Union and blogs for www.dailyyonder.com.

By David P. Gushee

In Pursuit of the Common Good

What does individualism have to do with Christianity? Not much.

A TENSION BETWEEN libertarian individualism and pursuit of the common good characterizes all Western liberal democracies. This tension is nowhere more acute today than in the United States, where the forces of libertarian individualism are far more powerful than in Europe, or than they have been in our country at any time since the late 19th century. But Christian tradition affirms that human beings are social, cannot flourish in isolation, and should seek the well-being of the whole rather than merely their own well-being—and that government exists especially to pursue the common good of the whole community.

By "libertarian individualism," I mean the belief that societies and their governments are a necessary evil: Individuals are what matter, and all that these lone rangers

seek from their neighbors is to be left alone to pursue the "good life" as they define it. Individuals reluctantly choose to give up a little of their freedom—as little as possible—to governments, whose very limited purpose, according to this view, is to provide the security services that are absolutely necessary to prevent threats against persons and property.

Laissez-faire capitalism in its pure form extends the same kind of thinking to corporations. What might be called "corporationist individualism" views a business as a kind of individual actor that should be left alone to pursue its goals.

Understanding this vision helps us make sense of the rhetoric and policy proposals of the major players in the Republican Party today. The reason Ron Paul can argue for the

abolition of major government departments, such as Education and Housing and Urban Development, is because he believes providing such services is no proper business of government. One reason many Republicans want a flatter tax structure is because the idea of progressive taxation—where the wealthier pay at least a marginally higher tax rate than the poor—enshrines a vision of government in which its actions seek to contribute to a more level economic playing field. But such a goal, from a libertarian point of view, is completely inappropriate for government to pursue.

Such individualism is a relatively recent innovation, traceable at its earliest to the 17th century. It is a mere child compared to the much older, and much preferable, Christian

Christian tradition affirms that human beings cannot flourish in isolation.

theological-ethical tradition of the *common good*. The stark contradictions between the two visions became noticeable quite early in the emergence of modern liberal democratic capitalism. These differences eventually evoked fierce battles on the part of Christian leaders to curb the worst excesses of libertarian and corporationist individualism.

The Catholic social teaching tradition is one important voice that affirms strong commitment to the common good. I resonate deeply with this tradition when it affirms that God created humans as social rather than solitary creatures; that the well-being of the individual is inextricably connected to the well-being of all; that all Christians must be interested in contributing to “social conditions which allow people ... to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily”; and that “the role of the state is to defend and promote the common good,” as the Catholic catechism puts it.

The upsurge of libertarian individualism is wrong theologically, wrong ethically, and wrong in terms of the public policies it inspires. It will and must be challenged by the common good tradition. ■

David P. Gushee teaches Christian ethics at Mercer University in Georgia.



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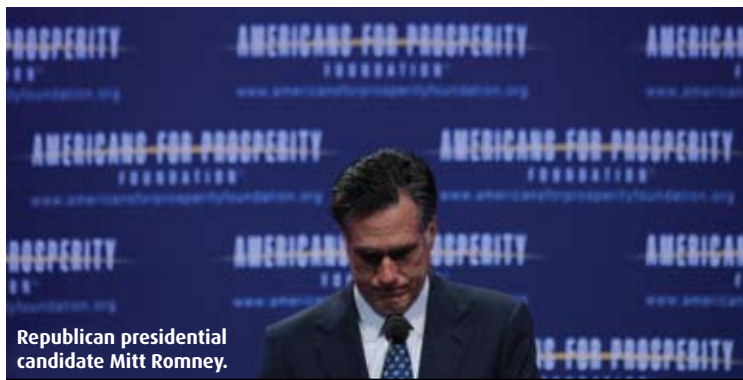
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When Faith is Attacked

RELIGIOUS PREJUDICE has become a major campaign issue during the Republican primaries this fall. Not surprisingly, it's the "M" word. Surprisingly, the M word in question is not "Muslim." While Newt Gingrich and Herman Cain have both made remarks about the alleged dangers of sharia law in American courts, the M word making the most waves is "Mormon." The issue is this: Will a key Republican voting bloc—conservative evangelical Christians—refuse to support the likely front-runner, Mitt Romney, a Mormon?

The biggest wave thus far was caused by Robert Jeffress, who introduced presidential hopeful Rick Perry at the Values Voter Summit in October and then made the rounds of reporters declaring Mitt Romney's religion a "cult" and saying "born-again followers of Christ should always prefer [a] competent Christian to a competent non-Christian like Mitt Romney."

Watching the news coverage of this incident, I've been struck by two things. One, for the most part, the tone that the media appears to be



Jason Reed/Reuters

someone's race against her in a political election is an act of prejudice, and it's bad. So why is counting someone's religion against him any less an act of prejudice? Why has our media become enlightened enough to call out racism or sexism in political races, but when it comes to religious prejudice, the tone is, "Gee, look at that. Wonder how that faith is going to play?"

Here's the second thing I've been thinking about. After the crazed discourse around Cordoba House (popularly known as the "Ground Zero mosque") in the 2010 congressional elections, I was bracing myself for a full-on assault on Muslims in the lead-up to 2012. So I am relieved that doesn't appear to be happening, at least at this stage. But I really shouldn't be. Just because my faith isn't being attacked in public doesn't mean that I should sit back and rest. The fact that it's someone else's faith being attacked implicates me just as strongly.

When I was in high school, I watched a Jewish friend of mine wither under a steady stream of anti-Semitic insults. I watched in silence. A few years later, my friend raised the issue with me. It was not the stones thrown by his tormentors that made him suffer most, he said; it was the silence of his friends. Having him look me in the eye and say that remains the single most humiliating experience of my life.



When I shared the experience with my father, he responded with deep disappointment. "You didn't just fail your friend," he told me, "you failed your faith. You didn't live up to what it means to be a Muslim."

My faith teaches me to stand up for those who are suffering, *especially* if they don't share my faith. It is what Muslim heroes from the Prophet Muhammad to Badshah Khan did. It's what the heroes of all faiths do—I think of what people such as Jim Wallis, Brian McLaren, Skye Jethani, Bob Roberts, and Rich Cizik did for Muslims around the Ground Zero mosque debate in America, or what Bonhoeffer did for Jews in Nazi Germany.

Many in the media are asking, "Are Mormons Christians?" An interesting and important question, no doubt. But it has no relevance to our politics or public life. Here's the question that matters: Are people who claim to be Christian going to act like Christians? Same with Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and humanists. In all of our traditions, standing up for those who suffer prejudice because of their faith or tradition is part of what it means to be who we say we are. ■

Eboo Patel is founder of the Interfaith Youth Core and author of Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation.

It was not the stones thrown by his tormentors that made him suffer; it was the silence of his friends.

taking regarding an issue of blatant religious prejudice is what I would call "descriptive/inquisitive."

Cable news anchors ask questions such as, "Do you think Romney's religion is going to cost him the election?" Replace the term "religion" with "economic plan," and the tone would be the same. Now imagine if we replace Romney's "religion" with Romney's "race" or "gender." The tone changes—it goes from descriptive/inquisitive to offended and outraged—and it should. That's because our society has, again for the most part, recognized that counting



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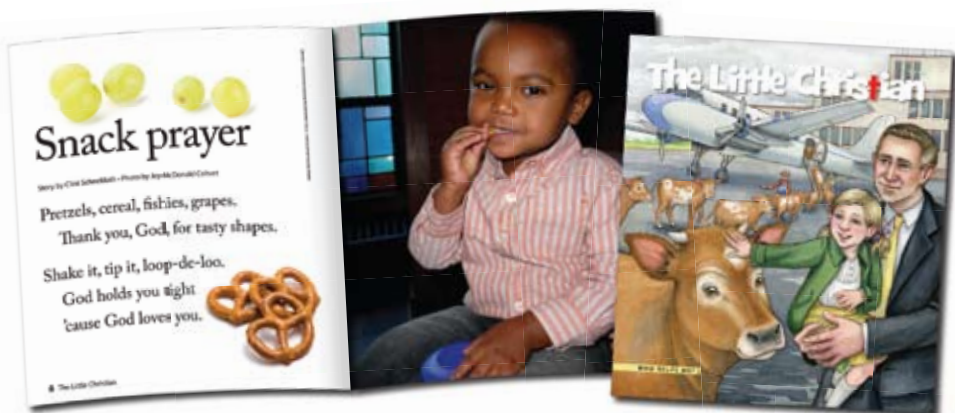
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Gratitude for the 'Better Men'

RECENTLY I WATCHED "I Came to Testify," the first program in a PBS series called *Women, War, and Peace*. The documentary focused on 16 Bosnian women who were brutally raped by Serbian soldiers during the war in the Balkans in the early 1990s. When the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal tried three of the perpetrators of these "crimes against humanity," these 16 women told their stories.

The three men listened to the women without showing one hint of emotion or regret. All were found guilty of hundreds of counts of rape, but their sentences seem light: 26 years for one, 20 years and 12 years for the others. I traveled twice to Bosnia during that war; I met women like the 16 who testified about the rape camps. I was surprised by the light sentences and disheartened to know that most of the perpetrators will never even be brought to trial.



of *Public Health*, women are victimized at a rate of nearly one every minute. Two years ago in the Congo, I talked and wept and prayed with some of these women. I also talked

I'm grateful to the men who use their power, money, and influence on behalf of women.

I cannot hear stories like this without being shocked anew by how often women suffer at the hands of men. But something else struck me as I watched this program. The narrator was a man, actor Matt Damon. "As a man raising four daughters, things like this matter to me," Damon said. "But it would have mattered anyway ... It's important to understand the experience of women."

As I listened to Damon, I thought of Nicholas Kristof, co-author of *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, a book that compellingly highlights the suffering of women. One chapter focused on rape as a weapon of war in the Republic of Congo, where, according to the *American Journal*

with local pastors, mentored by a Congolese man named Marcel, who raise money and create care groups to help bring these violated women "back to life"—that's how the women describe what the pastors and the care groups do for them.

I recently wrote a foreword for a book called *The Resignation of Eve* that examines the role of women in the church and suggests ways to give women the same respect and honor Jesus gave them. Author Jim Henderson believes that women are too often victims of the abuse and misuse of power. "In the spirit of our master who flipped the tables in the Temple on their tops,"

Henderson wants women to have the freedom, power, and influence they're meant to have.

Tomas Perez, father of three daughters, recently learned that each year in the U.S., 100,000 minors are forced into prostitution or sexual slavery. In response, Perez started EPIK, hoping to engage 100,000 men in raising awareness and funds to support organizations that rescue exploited kids. "Men created this problem," says Perez. "Better men have to solve it."

Generally in my writing I challenge privileged American women to work on behalf of oppressed women, and I won't stop doing that. But today I'm feeling gratitude to the men—the better men—who use their power, money, and influence on behalf of women. So thank you Matt, Nicholas, Marcel, Jim, and Tomas.

May an army of better men rise up to join you! ■



Lynne Hybels, co-founder of Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois, is author of *Nice Girls Don't Change the World*.



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AMERICA THE EXCEPTIONAL

**What kind of nation are we called to be: arrogantly superior
or humbly exemplary?**

WHAT DOES IT mean to be exceptional?

Most people have to worry about making enemies. You know, they're constantly freaked out that they might offend somebody or hurt somebody's precious feelings. But I don't worry about that. I'm exceptional. Other people in my family worry about everyone getting their fair share at the dinner table. They might really like mashed potatoes or lasagna, but they only take a normal small portion so that their sister or grandmother or cousin can have some too. But I don't worry about those sorts of things. After all, I'm exceptional. I take as much as I want.

When you're an exceptional nation, you want other nations to worry about your opinion of them. You don't really care what their opinion is of you. When you're a run-of-the-mill country, you'll be nervous about going against the United Nations or the Geneva Conventions or the International Criminal Court and such, but when you're an exceptional country, that sort of concern is beneath your dignity. You set expectations; you don't fulfill them. Of course, with exceptional status comes exceptional responsibility, so we have the sole responsibility to drop nuclear bombs on nations that cause problems for the world—unexceptional nations, that is, which means everybody else but us. It's a tough job, being exceptional, but somebody has to do it.

BETWEEN NOW AND the elections in November, my guess is we're going to hear the term "American exceptionalism" echoing from the mountains to the prairies to the oceans white with foam; echoing ad nauseum. It's become a powerful political meme in recent years, popular but poorly defined. The history of the term aids and abets in its vagueness.

Thomas Jefferson repeatedly spoke of the United States as a unique—or

exceptional—historical phenomenon. As a democratic republic, it differed from Europe, and all the nations of the past. Since then, of course, scores of nations have followed our example in forming democratic republics, so what was exceptional in Jefferson's time has now, we might say, become the norm. Does that make us "the nation formerly known as exceptional," but now typical?

Alexis de Tocqueville, perhaps the best-



We're not only
choosing who will
lead our nation;
we're also choosing
what kind of nation
we will be.

loved (and certainly the most-quoted) Frenchman in U.S. history, also detailed certain features in which the U.S. was exceptional. But they're not exactly the attributes candidates are referring to today. For example, he said that Americans were so focused on making money that they didn't pay attention to "science, literature, and the arts" as Europeans did, yet somehow Americans had so far avoided "relapsing into barbarism." (He spoke before the era of TV shows such as *Married with Children* and *Jersey Shore*.) Our preoccupation with money even made Americans disregard religion, he said, except "from time to time," when we shoot "a transient and distracted glance to heaven." This money-focused turn of character, de Tocqueville concluded, made America exceptional—but not in an exemplary way.

The first historical record of the precise term "American exceptionalism" actually comes (this is embarrassing) from Joseph Stalin, who complained that American Communists thought themselves an exception to the normal rules of Marxist economic evolution. They were guilty, he said, of "the heresy of American exceptionalism."

Between de Tocqueville and Stalin, the idea of American exceptionalism became deeply associated with the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, the idea that God had chosen Americans, as God chose the ancient Israelites, for a special divine purpose on Earth. This belief was based on a passage in the Book of Genesis:

And the Lord said to Abraham, I will bless you and make your name great. I will make you a great nation and all nations will submit to your exceptional status. They will kow-tow to your interests, submit to your invasions, and defer to your economic policies. You will act unilaterally and lead, not cooperate with, unexceptional nations. You will use and abuse the alien and stranger among you as you please, for they are not my chosen people blessed by manifest destiny. And if other nations curse you by failing to acknowledge your exceptional status, you will smite them in my name. For I am the Lord who shows favoritism to whom he will, and you are my chosen people.

Oops! That is not Genesis 12—but it might as well have been, based on projects

and attitudes promoted via the doctrine of Manifest Destiny.

In our lifetime, President Obama paid muted homage to the doctrine, saying he believed in it the same way "the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." Sarah Palin (not surprisingly) wasn't satisfied: "... which is to say he doesn't believe in American exceptionalism at all. He seems to think it is just a kind of irrational prejudice in favor of our way of life. To me that is appalling."

What appalled Palin, apparently, was that President Obama failed to defend the "prejudice in favor of our way of life" as a rational one, which raises the question of what she means by "our way of life." I doubt she means what de Tocqueville meant or what Stalin meant.

In a September 2011 speech at the Reagan Library in Simi Valley, California, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie seemed to agree with Palin—to a degree. He defined the term as meaning, "... we are different and, yes, better." But then he raised a warning: "Unfortunately, through our own domestic political conduct of late, we have failed to live up to our own tradition of exceptionalism. Today, our role and ability to effect change has been diminished because of our own problems and our inability to effectively deal with them ..."

He returned to the theme later in his speech: "Today, the biggest challenge we must meet is the one we present to ourselves. To not become a nation that places entitlement ahead of accomplishment. To not become a country that places comfortable lies ahead of difficult truths. To not become a people that thinks so little of ourselves that we demand no sacrifice from each other. We are a better people than that; and we must demand a better nation than that."

The question raised by Christie's words is, of course, "Of whom do we demand a better nation?" For many, the answer will be their party or their candidate. But the only realistic answer would be that we demand of ourselves the commitment to face the challenges Christie named—to put accomplishment ahead of entitlement (including the entitlements associated with being an exceptional nation), to face the difficult

truths about ourselves, our past, and our future (including truths about the ways we have been negatively exceptional and not exceptional at all), and to demand sacrifice of each other ... and so to be better people and a better nation.

It is one thing to strive to become a better nation—better than we have been in the past, and better than we are at this moment. It's a very different thing to assume we already are better than all other nations in all important ways. The former describes a vibrant and hopeful nation; the latter an arrogant and self-deceived one. And that difference should be in our minds each time

exploiting) some national myth of manifest destiny, but instead creating a national legacy for our children and grandchildren, a great nation among other great nations, through wisdom, justice, freedom, compassion, and action.

And that, I think, is the only kind of exceptionalism that is theologically justified.

In the Hebrew scriptures, the idea of being chosen or exceptional is highly problematic. It was used to justify horrific acts (see Deuteronomy 7:1-5). But even in the same disturbing passages that command behavior we would call genocidal, God

Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?" (9:7).

In the New Testament, Paul challenges the whole idea of seeking the first place. Don't think more highly of yourselves than you should, he says, "but have sober judgment" (Romans 12:3). "Be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:2-3). It's hard to imagine that on a bumper sticker: "We're Not Number One!" Our example isn't the emperor (or a contemporary politician) who claws his way to the top: It's the Lord who serves his way to the bottom (2:5 ff). There is the paradoxical exceptionalism of the Kingdom of God, as Christ commanded:

Paul challenges the whole idea of seeking first place: 'Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit.'

we hear the term "American exceptionalism" echoing across the fruited plain.

In what ways do we want to be exceptional—not in the sense of being different for difference's sake, and certainly not in the sense of being granted exceptions to normal standards of decency, but in the sense of being exemplary? In what ways do we want to lead?

Would we like to lead in resource consumption and environmental irresponsibility? Would we like to lead in wealth inequality, incarceration rates, and capital punishment? Would we like to lead in political polarization and partisan brinksmanship? Would we like to lead in unmitigated unsustainability—whether in the realm of national debt, personal debt, or environmental degradation? Would we like to lead in our refusal to demand sacrifices of the rich while demanding sacrifices of the poor and middle class? Would we like to lead military expenditures, drone strikes, weapons sales, toppled regimes, and occupations?

Next to nobody really wants to be exceptional in any of these ways.

At our best moments—whether we're Brits or Greeks or Argentines or Papua New Guineans or Americans—the kind of exceptionalism we really want is not arrogant superiority. What we want is to be a good and distinct people, the best possible version of ourselves, not merely fulfilling (and

goes out of God's way to remind the people that they were not chosen for their size or superiority, but for their smallness and weakness (Deuteronomy 7:6-7). God warns them not to "exalt themselves" in times of plenty. He commands them to remember that every blessing they will ever enjoy is a gift of God—not an attainment of their "power and the might of [their] own right hand" (8:12-18).

Even more striking, just as they are reminded that "the LORD set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples," they are further reminded that because God "loves the strangers ... You shall also love the strangers" (10:15-19).

And if the chosen people are tempted to presume upon their status, throughout Deuteronomy God solemnly promises them that their exceptionalism is conditional. If they don't fulfill the responsibilities (including caring for the poor—Deuteronomy 15) that go along with blessings they have received, their blessings will turn into curses (28:15 ff). The choice is theirs (30:11 ff).

So it turns out that President Obama had it right: People can feel exceptional without being exclusive about it, as the prophet Amos similarly affirms: "Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel? says the Lord. Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Chosen One came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28).

In an election year like this one, subtle choices are being made in addition to the obvious ones. We're not only choosing who will next lead our nation; we're also choosing what kind of nation our next president will lead: a nation more in the tradition of "the rulers of the Gentiles," or one more in line with the way of Jesus. Mediocre or excellent, arrogantly superior or humbly exemplary, exceptional in domination or exceptional in service, exceptionally regressive or exceptionally eager to "excel in doing good"—we are choosing not just whether or not to continue a historical tradition of "American exceptionalism," but more important, what kind of exceptionalism is worth desiring in the America of the future. ■

Brian D. McLaren is an author, speaker, and activist based in southwest Florida. His next book, *Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Walk into a Bar: Christian Identity in a Multi-Faith World*, will be published in September 2012.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Multigenerational households are becoming more common, by choice or by necessity—and these expanded family circles have both benefits and perils.

IT TAKES A village to raise a child. This proverb gained pressing relevance for me when my husband and I embarked on our journey of parenthood. Even though my husband was as involved with the care of our infant daughter as I was, it quickly became clear that we were not up to this adventure alone—at least not with our sanity intact. We needed help. We needed a village.

Luckily, our family in Santiago, Chile, along with wonderful babysitters, helped us through our firstborn's infancy and then the birth of her sister. But when we moved to Brooklyn four years ago, that all changed. Despite stellar neighbors and exceptional friends, we struggled with the physical and emotional challenges of parenting our now three young girls full-time. Since my husband travelled frequently for work, I was a single parent for days and sometimes weeks at a time.

Meanwhile, we had excellent relationships with our extended families, and a life equally distant from both sets of relatives seemed increasingly absurd. After three years of swimming upstream just to stay afloat emotionally, financially, and socially, we decided to move back to my home town of Albuquerque, New Mexico—in search of a village.

The decision to *move* was based on our desire to live near family. The decision to actually *move in* with my parents was driven primarily by finances: Our stay in Brooklyn on one nonprofit salary was subsidized by MasterCard and other creative financial arrangements that would horrify Suze Orman.

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family photo

Center study, in 2008 49 million Americans lived in multigenerational housing (defined as “at least two adult generations or a grandparent and at least one other generation”). This is a 33 percent increase in the share of all Americans living in such households since 1980. Although this is partly due to a rise in immigration, the stagnant economy is also significant—between 2007 and 2008 alone, the number of Americans living in multigenerational housing grew by 2.6 million.

Though the trend is apparent for all ages, research shows that the elderly and the young are overrepresented. The physical decline of aging baby boomers and cuts to health and income benefits mean that some parents cannot care for themselves financially,

Surprises and challenges that come from living in close quarters are inevitable.

Living with my parents for a year would allow us to repay debts and save for our own place. Fortunately, my parents were not only supportive but encouraging of the proposal—long stays with them in the past had gone well, and while we knew that the multigenerational household would mean adjustments for all of us, we also looked forward to being together.

Our year was up last July. We’re still here. The reasons are still financial, but only in part. We expected the real challenges of living in a multigenerational household. But we’ve all been surprised by the new richness we’ve found as a result of this experiment. Born of necessity, it just might be continued out of desire, intention, and gratitude.

The author, third from right standing, with her current household and other members of the extended family in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

OUR LIVING ARRANGEMENT is actually part of a growing national trend. The most visible example is in the White House, where three generations of Robinson-Obamas live together. According to a 2010 Pew Research

physically, or both, and must move in with their children. Lack of jobs, credit card debt, and high student loan payments have forced new college graduates to “boomerang” back to parents whose house, income, or jobs are more secure. These same dynamics, plus the housing market implosion, mean that many people, once financially independent and now with children of their own, are also moving back in with mom and dad. Multigenerational living has increased in every racial demographic since 2006, though Latinos (22 percent), African Americans (23 percent), and Asian Americans (25 percent) are still more likely to live with multiple generations than are Caucasians (13 percent).

Many people who move in with relatives fully intend to move on once they are able. For others, including elderly parents, the stay will be longer and will require long-term planning to meet increasing needs.

Whatever the specific situation, many of us are living together (again). And many are not only making it work, but, like my family, finding unexpected benefits and blessings that may make intergenerational living a choice, even when finances allow other options.

In our household, for example, meals have taken on a sacramental quality, with the entire family sitting down together most evenings. When I'm not working, I start dinner and help the girls with homework while my mom (a family therapist) sees her last clients and then joins me in dinner prep. Eventually my sister, who lives one block away, comes home from work, my niece in tow, and also chips in. After homework, the girls feed the dogs and help their grandfather with gardening or the other cooks with dinner, until the coveted video time (kids) and wine time (adults)—30 or so minutes before dinner when we unwind together and catch up on the day's news. After dinner, the men do the dishes and parents get the kids to bed, often with the help of a grandparent, auntie, or older cousin.

The obvious benefits start with the financial savings. Utilities, food, rent or mortgage, and other household bills are much lower per person when shared. It is cheaper to buy and prepare food in bulk, and more hands mean more energy for household chores. Parallel to the financial benefits are environmental ones—resources and space are used more efficiently and effectively in a shared household.

Living with relatives also has emotional benefits, especially in the form of support for parents—and kids and grandparents, too. The pressures on families from work, school, and activities mean that even two parents (let alone one!) truly struggle with how to meet everyone's needs on a daily basis. On-site grandparents can spell parents from the constant physical and emotional energy needed to raise kids, and elderly parents get help with the house, transportation, and finances.

Beyond the tangible financial, ecological, and practical benefits, my family is especially grateful for the emotional blessings of multigenerational living. Since my childhood nuclear family lived far from both sets of relatives, I never knew the joyful chaos of birthday parties or holidays with grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins.

To watch my daughters forming special and unique relationships with their grandparents is a privilege and a blessing for all involved. When my husband and I are busy or otherwise unavailable, my daughters seek out their grandparents for conversation, help, or just company. More than once, a grandparent or auntie has rescued me and my husband from our children, and vice versa, when one or all of us are out of patience and verging on a tantrum.

The emotional benefits extend both ways. The Pew study also showed that “Older adults

Born of necessity, our multigenerational household just might be continued out of desire, intention, and gratitude.

who live alone are less healthy and they more often feel sad or depressed than their counterparts who live with a spouse or with others.” This is the case, the study reports, “even after controlling for demographic factors such as gender, race, age, income, and education.”

My mom concurs; in her words: “Because we share the same values, and because I know that I am loved and appreciated, I have more energy, support, and help thinking through issues than if I were alone.” This is not insignificant in a culture in which loneliness is so pervasive that Mother Teresa once called it “the leprosy of the West.”

ISSUES OF INDEPENDENCE and self-sufficiency loom large in the decision to live with family. To do so bucks a 50-year trend in which full financial and physical independence was heavily prized and sought after by both parents and children. A century ago, living with multiple generations or close to home (within five miles) was the norm for most American families. In the mid-20th century, however, greater economic prosperity and cultural shifts meant a change in attitudes in which children were encouraged to, and wanted to, leave home. In *Under One Roof Again: All Grown Up and (Re)learning to Live Together Happily*, author Susan Newman notes that “Parents were thought to have done a ‘good job’ if their high school and college graduates functioned and thrived hundreds, even

thousands of miles away from them.” But many people are rethinking the wisdom of choices that leave families scattered across large swaths of the country—especially when they enjoy being together.

Multigenerational living is not, of course, all fun and games, and is certainly not for everyone. The challenges are many and well-documented in books and online. For us and for many other families in the same situation, defining and respecting the boundaries of all the roles and relationships (couple, parent, grandparent) is a must. My husband and

I are clear that we assume all responsibility for the kids and never expect my parents, sister, or niece to help out unless we secure their help beforehand. My parents have been careful to schedule alone time in the form of “date nights” a couple times a week, as well as monthly getaways. When my husband and I are not as diligent about our own need for couple and small-family time, we pay a price in our ability to communicate and in our identity as a couple.

Open communication is the second requirement for successful extended-family living. Talking about expectations, dividing responsibilities, and checking in on a regular basis about financial and other logistical agreements has minimized tensions for us.

Once together, however, surprises, changes, and challenges that come from living in close quarters with different people are inevitable, no matter how much preparation has taken place. As with other great life-changers—the birth of your first child, the death of a parent—preparation only goes so far, and the rest is jumping in with both feet, feeling your way through, and hoping for the best. And like those other great life changes, it will get messy—physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Which is where faith comes in.

Vickie Sloderbeck, like many people I spoke to for this article, relies on a tool box provided by her Christian faith to find answers to sticky situations and to understand the experience in general. Her

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household includes her mother, her and her husband, their two youngest children, and an older daughter and son-in-law with their three children. (Vickie and her daughter Faith co-author a blog on multigenerational living, homeschooling, and other topics at www.sidetrackedmoms.com.) Vickie notes that her concerns about her mother's aging, as well as her and her husband's, are alleviated by their household arrangement and the knowledge that whatever the future brings, "we are here together to share in whatever faces us." In addition, the elders in the family are able to play key roles in the spiritual development of their grandchildren, "in small, everyday moments that wouldn't occur if we still lived in separate places."

Religious beliefs can also help families negotiate tough living situations. Bill (real name withheld by request), whose son, daughter-in-law, and grandson moved in "temporarily" two years ago, has relied on his faith to interpret what has been a very challenging arrangement. Without either intentionality or open communication about living together, Bill feels that they are just enduring, rather than enjoying, the arrangement. His faith, however, allows him to persevere and to try to remain gracious: "If I didn't believe in a loving God, I would just think that it's hard, or their fault."

Christianity is not unique here, of course. All major religions cite the importance of family, community, honoring parents and elders, and the special need to care for the most vulnerable—the elderly, the sick, children, and those who are alone.

Whether one's multigenerational living situation is by choice or not, religious beliefs may help give both the vocabulary to describe the experience and the lens through which to interpret the highs and lows that come with living in close quarters. My understanding of Christian discipleship and its emphasis on community has greatly influenced my desire to make this situation work. Christianity, by definition, begins and ends with community. As my mom put it, "What more could one ask? Aren't we meant, as humans, to be in loving relationship with one another?" ■

Michaela Bruzzese is a clinical pastoral education student in hospital chaplaincy living in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Poetry

BY ANNIE DEPPE

Trumpet

There were two sets of stairs:
the front ones curving and formal
while the backstairs rose steep
as a canyon wall. As a girl, I used to fly
from their heights when I wasn't falling.

And now I climb a footbridge
to what remains
of Civita di Bagnoregio, a small hilltown
like an island in the sky, surrounded
by spectacular nothingness.

Moments ago, I was terrified
looking up at the projected journey,
but now, safely inside the walls,
there's a rush of energy, a feeling
of never being more inside my body,

exploring small lanes
over two thousand years old
that all end at the brink.
The stone church with relics of Bonaventura,
a wooden manger in an Etruscan cave,

a *bruschetta* with garlic toasted over coals,
and a framed photo of a man on a horse
barrelling down
an earlier incarnation of the footbridge,
his face lit by something wild.

My older brother's room was at the top
of our backstairs. I am haunted still
by the sounds of his weeping
beyond the door. But other times
there were the golden notes of his trumpet,

creating a space in his bedroom
for something so much larger.
I hear him playing Bach
in this Italian town where every century or so
another house or lane lets go.

*Annie Deppe is the author of **Sitting in the Sky** and **Wren Cantata**. She lives (mostly) on the west coast of Ireland.*



POISONING EDEN

Indigenous communities—and local church leaders—stand against open-pit mining that threatens to despoil Patagonia.

PATAGONIA IS A land of myth. Like Siberia or the Australian outback, it's one of those far-off places that, despite today's round-the-clock global information flow, remain a mystery. Unfortunately, the myth of Patagonia as distant wild country has become a smokescreen for those who profit from extracting the region's subsurface resources—silver, gold, uranium, lead, and oil. From their point of view, the less anyone knows about what's happening, the better.

A 2011 protest against destructive mining in Patagonia.

When I arrived in the South American region of Patagonia nearly a decade ago, the general public was almost entirely unaware of the mining bonanza about to

burst onto the landscape, though government and corporate officials had already set the wheels in motion. After a few years setting down roots, I saw the mining activity rapidly picking up speed. As a result I spent a year filming a documentary about extractive industries and widespread conflict over land rights in the area. As is the case with so many resource-rich areas of the world, the communities hardest hit, and least rewarded, by mining are Indigenous Peoples.

The Mapuche people native to Patagonia lived semi-nomadically on both sides of the Andes, in what is now Chile and Argentina. In the 1880s,





Protests by Argentina's Mapuche people against the mining in Patagonia were supported by Catholic priest David Garcia, upper right.

brutal military campaigns by the Chilean and Argentinian governments finished a two-century-old project that wiped out the majority of the population and left survivors scattered in the most isolated and inhospitable land around, which of course no white folks wanted. Until recently, when they discovered profitable mineral deposits under it.

Last spring I made the trip out to the tiny settlement of Gan Gan, more than 200 miles from the nearest asphalt. Just outside town there are vast reserves of silver and lead spread in imperceptible dustings across tens of thousands of acres. All this underneath land where for centuries the Mapuche have herded their goats, hunted guanaco, raised their children, and buried their elders. The Canada-based Pan American Silver Corporation is spending tens of millions of dollars to explore what has been named the “Navidad” deposit and to build an open-pit cyanide-leach mine in this region.

PRIOR TO THE three-day assembly in Gan Gan of Indigenous community leaders from around the steppe—and what would be the first street demonstration in the history of the town—a group of us congregated before sunrise for a Mapuche spiritual ceremony. In this land of bitter cold and driving wind, it's striking that the culture performs all its important rituals in the icy predawn

hours—the time when all creation seems to bristle with energy ready to spring forth into the light of a new day, when spiritual forces are at their most potent. We circled the fire pit in pairs, scattering tea leaves and sugar, each of us murmuring prayers in our own way—the elder Mapuche leaders, younger Mapuche from cities on the coast, and a handful of huincas (non-natives) like myself.

One of the other huincas was David García,

Gan Gan's parish priest. A tall, rugged fellow in his early 60s, Padre David has been working with uncommon grit and determination

to support community organizing against the mine. I can't help but appreciate the delightful irony of a priest as a key opponent to a mine named for Christmas. Meetings and rallies would be virtually impossible without Padre David spending days driving back and forth on gravel roads across half the province to pick people up. His church publications constantly lambast the pro-mining actions of the local government. Despite being more than three decades my senior, his batteries never run down. I suppose when you're looking down the barrel of an open-pit mine, you can't afford to run out of steam.

But what is open-pit mining? How does it work? Here's a primer:

- Nearly all of the useful minerals on Earth that could be found by simply digging and sifting out bits of ore mechanically have already been mined. The only minerals left are disseminated; meaning it's now profitable, for example, to grind a ton of rock into dust to extract 10 grams of gold or 100 grams of silver.

- It's impossible to separate out these infinitesimal traces by any mechanical means, so after the rock is dynamited and pulverized, it is piled in enormous heaps and drenched in cyanide (though when “public relations” get to be a problem, other equally noxious but less scary-sounding reagents are chosen). To get any worthwhile amount of metal, you usually have to do this to an entire mountain, or dig several pits a mile wide and a half-mile deep.

- The cyanide bonds to the coveted metal dust and separates it from the rest of the toxic slurry, which is then poured into a giant artificial pond where it often leaches into the groundwater.

- This process may go on for a decade or two at any given site, after which the mining company packs up and moves on. Anywhere a mining operation like this has taken place, whether in Colorado or China, Montana or Mozambique, the only thing that falls faster than the water quality is the real estate value. The only human activity more destructive to a place than open-pit mining is outright warfare.

To prevent this from happening to their homes, the native communities, huinca supporters, and the Catholic Church have held

public demonstrations in Gan Gan, press conferences in the larger cities nearby, and two marches in the provincial capital demanding a response from government officials. Both times, the crowd gathered outside the state house and waited the entire day without a word from authorities.

The level of government collusion with the industry approaches absurdity. In 2003, after massive public protests over proposed mines near larger cities, the province banned open-pit mining. But the Navidad project continues. Mining companies confidently state that they are continuing with exploration because they have assurances the law will be changed soon. In effect, mining is prohibited—until someone is actually ready to begin digging. Environmental impact statements for the exploration process in Patagonia were released for public comment in May 2011, nearly a decade after exploration began.

THIS AUTUMN WE rode on horseback across the steppe to where the land is crisscrossed by exploration roads and dotted with sampling wells, machinery lots, and sheds full of chemicals. On foot, by car, by bus, and by horse, people converged on the mine site to say this is not what we do here.

We were joined by an anti-mining activist from La Rioja, in northwest Argentina, who told us how she and her town—desperate to survive—have kept mine access roads



Indigenous identity. He told me it was a question of proper priorities. Sometimes that's Mass, he said, and sometimes it's addressing the mining issue. "When Jesus met with people, the first thing he did was find the sick and heal them, find those with problems and listen to them. Then, near the end of his

phrases on their vans and drive around trying to convince the Indigenous people to come to church. With so many doing their best to stamp out the last remnants of Indigenous spiritual identity, it's hard not to be wary of someone bearing a cross in matters of Indigenous rights.

Padre David himself is well aware of the many interests at play, especially around the mining project. "As a priest I have my own interests—my interest is to defend these people who have the right to live, and live a life of abundance."

"What do [the mining representatives] do when they talk to people?" he asked. "They say, 'You should live a better life; you'll live better with the help of the company,' but what's behind that? They just give handouts to convince people not to oppose the mine, and slowly people are starting to pick up on that." Cultivate dependence and you cement your hold on power.

After decades of cultivation by governments, corporations, and charities, the culture of induced dependence is hard to break. If you put it in terms of the old "give a person a fish ... or teach a person to fish ..." adage, the strategy used by those in power has been "give

Continued on Page 45

Environmental impact statements were released for public comment nearly a decade after exploration began.

blockaded for the last five years. I wouldn't be surprised to find us reaching that point here before too long.

Whether this is an "environmental issue" or one of "Indigenous rights," at the core it's about survival. Survival is why we gathered that morning facing the dawn. Survival is why a priest stood among us with the native elders scattering offerings across the fire. We all drink the same water, and we're going to need all the help we can get.

During one of our long trips, I asked Padre David about where he sees himself in the relationship between Catholicism and the

life, he created the Mass," David said. "As a priest, why all this effort? Because Christ has come to tell us we are a family. And that family is formed in a human way, accepting each other, listening to each other, finding ways we can live in solidarity with others."

Still, many look askance at a member of the clergy working outside of typical territory. For a priest to be dealing with "the environment" is strange, they say, but for him to be meddling with problems faced by an Indigenous culture is downright worrisome. Their skepticism is not unfounded; other religious outfits put Mapuche-language



CRITICAL MASS

Fifty years after Vatican II, will a new generation of lay Catholics lead prophetic change in the church and in the world?

U.S. CATHOLICS MAKE up just 6 percent of the global Catholic Church's nearly 1.2 billion baptized members. In Africa, Latin America, and the Philippines, membership from conversions and population growth is increasing rapidly, as are vocations to the priesthood and religious life. This accounts for a worldwide increase in the number of priests.

Today there are more bishops and cardinals from developing nations than ever before. Because the Roman Catholic Church adapted its liturgy to local languages and customs after Vatican II, Catholics in Africa dance as Communion is brought to the altar, and the liturgical vestments reflect African designs and colors. Local people in the developing world find this reformed church attractive and inviting. The Church also offers them an array of urgently needed social services—food, shelter, medicine, wartime sanctuary, advocacy for the poor—and rare opportunities for education and career advancement.

From the Vatican's perspective, growth in these regions shows the Church succeeding in its mission. Such success may also cause Church leaders to downplay the concerns and grievances of Catholics in the developed world. Why is the Church not succeeding in the same ways there?

under Pope John XXIII and was completed in 1965 under Pope Paul VI. It changed the ways the Church and smaller groupings of Catholics engaged society. Pope John XXIII said, "I want to throw open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in," and the consequences have been far-reaching.

In the developed world, where Catholics participate in democracies, are highly educated and relatively affluent, and expect a voice in church matters, the Catholic Church appears less adaptive than it does in the developing world. To progressives, the Church can seem unnecessarily hierarchical and self-preoccupied. Add to this the scandals over clergy sexual abuse and the cover-ups by some bishops, and the last decade has been particularly troubling for active, progressive Catholics.

Currently, Catholics hold differing views over whether Vatican II has gone too far or not far enough, a discussion that will no doubt rise to the surface over the next three years. But what was Vatican II and how can we understand it?

The Vatican Council took place across four autumns. In that brief but exciting period, the world's Catholic bishops set in motion the revitalization of the Church. The council promoted many reforms, but two stand out. First, the council articulated the vocation of laypeople and their call to discipleship. Rather than emphasizing the "holiness" of just the priesthood, bishops encouraged all Catholics to strive for holiness and to bring their faith with them into the workplace, civil society, and the Church itself. Many have done this in profound and unexpected ways.

Alessandro Bianchi/Reuters

A woman holds a rosary on her face during a Mass led by Pope Benedict XVI in Cameroon in 2009 during his first trip to Africa.

THIS YEAR MARKS the beginning of a three-year commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, also known as Vatican II, which addressed the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world. The council convened in 1962

Challenges Ahead for the Post-Vatican II Church

DESPITE THE ENORMOUS success of lay involvement and Catholic outreach to the world, several trends indicate serious challenges for the Catholic Church in the United States.

■ With family size shrinking and birth-rates low, the total number of U.S. Catholics would have declined in recent years were it not for **Latinos**, who bring the Church youth and a higher birth-rate. Will the Church be able to keep their loyalty? The bishops' position in favor of comprehensive immigration reform ought to help.

■ With **fewer priests** and a growing Catholic population, parishes are merging and becoming larger. The average parish has 1,200 families (not individuals); one-third of parishes are as large or larger than Protestant megachurches. Will huge parishes provide the spiritual formation and community that Catholics seek and Vatican II envisioned?

■ A majority of **young Catholics** (born since 1981) consider themselves "spiritual" but not religious. How will the Church engage this generation?

■ More Catholics are **marrying non-Catholics**. Can the Church foster their faith and encourage them to pass it on to their children?

■ Young Catholics hold much more liberal views on key issues of **sexual morality** than do the seminarians who are studying to become their future pastors. How will these differences be worked out in the parish?

■ Some active, **progressive Catholics** have formed voluntary associations within the Church, such as Call to Action, the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church, FutureChurch, Voice of the Faithful, and the American Catholic Council. Yet bishops tend to dismiss these Catholics as dissident, fringe groups. Can progressives make their concerns known when few, if any, governing structures allow laypeople to participate? —KSS

Second, the council initiated an ongoing dialogue with the world. It sought not merely to condemn those with views considered heretical, as past councils had done. Rather, the Church hoped to engage the modern world, teaching it as well as learning from it in mutual discourse and action. With a striking gesture toward Christian unity that broke all precedent, the pope invited 29 non-Catholic Christians to attend the council as well. That act presaged fruitful ecumenical and interreligious conversations that continue to this day.

The reforms of Vatican II were vast and wide-ranging: visionary and historical, structural and liturgical. Mass was no longer said in Latin. Priests turned to the congregation, instead of standing with their backs to it. The Bible readings were revised to include much more scripture—most of the Bible in a three-year cycle. Many Catholics today take all these changes for granted, even though scholars judge Vatican II to be among the most momentous religious events of the 20th century.

More than 2,500 Catholic bishops assembled in Rome for the Second Vatican Council. (This was well over a thousand more than had attended the First Vatican Council in 1868.) The media seized upon this once-in-a-century spectacle, reporting the event for the first time live on radio and television. Another stunner: At the third and fourth sessions, a small group of women, including Catholic sisters, were invited to attend as observers—an unprecedented symbolic gesture of hospitality toward the female half of the Church, otherwise conspicuously missing.

Vatican II, which likely will be remembered in history as the gathering that opened the Church not just to the world, but to its own laity, ironically had only a few laypeople present. In a church that had made a great distinction between men who were ordained and the many non-ordained laypeople, it was a profound shift for the council to declare: "These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world."

HOW DO MODERATE and progressive Catholics in the United States regard Vatican II today? For younger Catholics, today's Church is the only one they've ever known—Vatican II is ancient history, and few realize how the Church previously understood itself. For those Catholics who *can* remember the pre-Vatican II era, the council remains a high point, a defining moment not only in the life of the Church, but in their personal lives of faith.

Catholics have experienced not only the challenge of implementing Vatican II's reforms, but also the internal strife caused

Scholars judge Vatican II among the most momentous religious events of the 20th century.

by competing interpretations of the council's vision and documents. Polarized groups within the Church have waged "liturgy wars" over translations and changes in ritual that reflect conflicting understandings of what the Church is and what it should be.

Additionally, Catholics have seen particular council reforms weakened, if not undone or overturned. For example, while most Catholics around the world embraced the liturgy that emerged after Vatican II, with its emphasis on Catholics worshiping in their own language, a few resisted. Not long ago, the old Latin Mass—the abolition of which was one of the hallmarks the Catholic Church coming into the modern world—was restored as an option.

Other examples include post-Vatican II translations of the Mass hymns and prayers, intended to be more inclusive and accessible to modern worshipers. Some of these translations have been rejected by Rome and redrafted. The latest version of the Mass in English—including the new liturgical texts introduced in Advent 2011—use non-inclusive language and some objectionable phrases. One phrase narrows salvation's scope: The new language says that Christ died for "the many," not "for all" as the previous version put it.

In a few dioceses, the bishop no longer allows altar girls to serve at Mass—saying that they believe it discourages boys from considering a vocation to the priesthood—or women to have their feet washed on Holy

Demonstrators unfurl a “peace flag” in St. Peter’s Square in Rome after the pope led the world’s Catholics in prayers for peace.

Thursday, saying that Jesus washed only the feet of male apostles.

Ecumenism, too, has suffered. To cite just one example: Pope Benedict has welcomed into the Catholic Church Anglicans disaffected over the ordination of women in their own denomination; among Catholics the very discussion of women’s ordination has been forbidden.

TO MANY MAINSTREAM Catholics, the Vatican II reforms appear to be unraveling, one prayer or literal translation at a time. But there is hope. Although the Latin Mass has been restored as a choice, very few Catholics anywhere have embraced it. And while some reactionary critics have blamed Vatican II for the decline in weekly Mass attendance and the decrease in the number of priests and sisters in the U.S., that explanation has become less plausible. For one thing, most mainline churches—both Catholic and Protestant—have experienced declines.

Critics of Vatican II seldom acknowledge its accomplishments. For example, the number of deacon ordinations has grown with the re-establishment of the “permanent diaconate,” a position that was part of the early Christian church and restored at Vatican II. In the U.S. some 17,000 Catholic men serve in their diocese as trained and ordained deacons.

The best news, though, is that millions of Catholic laypeople have embraced the challenges of Vatican II. In parishes, teams of laypeople take on responsibilities at each Mass; they distribute Communion, proclaim scripture, welcome congregants, and lead the music. Catholics now have Bible study groups, for too long a strictly Protestant emblem. They study scripture in parish workshops, colleges, graduate schools, and seminaries—evincing a desire, set in motion at Vatican II, to know the Bible.

Lay catechists and sponsors oversee the months-long Rite of Christian Initiation process by which adults who want to become Catholics learn about the Church. Laypeople serve on parish advisory councils and finance councils. And 30,000 laypeople, mostly women, work full-time on parish staffs, directing religious education, youth programs, music, counseling, and social services. In 2010, another 18,500 laypeople in the U.S. were enrolled in degree and certification



programs in preparation for parish ministry. Thousands of non-ordained Catholics who might once have become priests or sisters are answering a different call today: to lay ministry.

Beyond the local church level, thousands of young adults and college students give one to three years of service to the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Mercy Corps, and

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY of Vatican II affords the Church an opportunity to teach, motivate, and inspire Catholics, including those too young to remember the council and any others who do not know what it taught. Many will welcome the anniversary as a reminder of what the Church is like at its best.

At Vatican II the world’s bishops confi-

For younger Catholics, today’s Church is the only one they’ve ever known.

other groups that serve the poor and work for justice. Lay Catholics have leadership positions at Catholic social welfare organizations, such as Catholic Charities USA and Catholic Relief Services, and the hospital systems sponsored by religious communities of Catholic sisters. Laypeople make up the majority of teachers and administrators at Catholic schools, colleges, and universities, once the preserve of Catholic religious orders. Many have earned advanced degrees in theology. Most Catholic theologians in the U.S. today are laypeople, and many are women—an unexpected development since Vatican II.

All of this makes up the other side of the so-called “vocation shortage.” And these examples exclude the majority of lay Catholics who bring faith into their daily lives beyond the parish and Catholic institutions.

dently opened the Church windows, called Catholic laypeople to discipleship and partnership with the clergy, and set out to engage the modern world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The anniversary celebration cannot solve all the Church’s problems, any more than Vatican II could. But it can help Catholics refocus on engagement with the modern world as the Church’s central purpose. For surely the Church’s task involves more than positioning Christ ever *against* the world. Christians ought to exemplify Christ *within* it and on its *behalf*. As Pope Paul VI says of the followers of Christ, in one of the Vatican II documents, “Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts.” ■

Karen Sue Smith is editorial director of America magazine, published by the Jesuits of the United States. She became a Catholic in 1976, heartened by Vatican II.

THE WAY OF PEACE AND GRACE

Paul shows us how to wrestle with violent passages in the Hebrew Bible.

THE DIVINE COMMANDS to commit genocide found in the Old Testament are some of the most difficult and disturbing parts of scripture. Consider God's decree against the Amalekites: "Totally destroy everything ... Do not spare them; put to death ... children and infants" (1 Samuel 15:2–3). Such passages have been used repeatedly to justify bloodshed in the name of

to Christ, which Pauline scholar James Dunn describes as a conversion from religion characterized by "zealous and violent hostility." While Paul could boast that his observance of the Torah was "faultless" (Philippians 3:6), at the same time he describes himself as "the worst of all sinners" and "a violent man" (1 Timothy 1:13, 15). He confesses painfully, "I do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:9). In other words, Paul's great sin, as he came to see it, had been participation in religiously justified acts of violence motivated by religious zeal.

Before his conversion, Paul had read his Bible as a Pharisee and concluded that he should commit violence in God's name. After his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul completely reassessed how to understand scripture, leading him to a radically different understanding.

IN ROMANS 15, for example, Paul quotes several scriptural passages to illustrate how Gentiles "may glorify God for his mercy" because of the gospel (verse 9). Highly significant is what Paul omits from these passages:

**"Death of Agag"
from 1 Samuel 15
by Gustave Doré.**

For I tell you that Christ has become a servant

A reading that faithfully challenges violence is also a deeply Jewish way to read scripture.

God, beginning with the Crusades and continuing right up through U.S. history, where texts were used in sermons to justify the slaughter of American Indians.

In seeking to defend the Bible, many well-meaning commentators have become inadvertent advocates for these atrocities. But do we really need to defend and justify violence in God's name in order to remain faithful to scripture? Is that what God desires of us? I'd like to propose that there is a better way—a way found in learning to read our Bibles as the apostle Paul read his.

To understand how Paul read scripture, it is important to first understand his conversion





Does salvation mean that God helps the Israelites kill their enemies—or does it mean the restoration of all people in Christ?

of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "I destroyed my foes. They cried for help, but there was no one to save them—to the LORD, but he did not answer.... He is the God who avenges me, who puts the Gentiles under me.... Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." [quoting Psalm 18:41–49]

Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people." [Deuteronomy 32:43]

Paul has removed the references to violence against Gentiles, and recontextualized these passages to instead declare God's mercy in Christ for Gentiles. This constitutes a major redefinition of how salvation is conceived: Instead of salvation meaning God helping the Israelites kill their enemies, Paul now understands salvation to mean the restoration of all people in Christ, including "enemy" Gentiles.

In Romans 12:19–21, Paul again quotes Deuteronomy 32, citing the Lord's declaration "it is mine to avenge" to argue that we should not seek vengeance, but rather work to "overcome evil with good." In its original context, however, this passage was a celebration of vengeance: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay ... I will make my arrows drunk with blood, while my sword devours flesh: the blood of the slain and the captives, the heads of the enemy leaders." This passage, which originally advocated vengeance and violence, is now used to promote enemy love.

Remarking on this pattern in Paul, New Testament scholar Richard Hays once joked that Paul would have surely flunked a seminary class in exegesis. But, as Hays himself argues, Paul was in fact intimately familiar with the original context of these passages, as were his readers. This is no case of sloppy exegesis. Paul is deliberately reversing the meaning—turning the tables in order to provoke his audience.

THIS IS ESPECIALLY evident in Romans 3:10–18, where Paul paints a picture of human fallenness, weaving together several passages from the psalms and prophets:

As it is written,

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." [quoting Psalm 14:1–3]

"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." [Psalm 5:9]

"The poison of vipers is on their lips." [Psalm 140:3]

"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." [Psalm 10:7]

"Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know." [Isaiah 59:7–8]

"There is no fear of God before their eyes." [Psalm 36:1]

Note that Paul's list of sins is focused on acts of hatred and violence: deceit and poisonous words, cursing and bitterness, killing, misery, and the behavior of those who don't know "the way of peace."

Read in their original context, these first three psalms each make a clear distinction between outside "evildoers" and the "righteous" in-group. For example, in the verse immediately following Paul's first quotation, Psalm 14 continues, "Will evildoers never learn—those who devour my people as men eat bread and who do not call on the Lord? There they are, overwhelmed with dread, for God is present in the company of the righteous." This is the complete opposite of the point Paul is making, which is that all of us are sinners, and thus have no room to judge. In contrast, the next psalm Paul quotes specifically calls out for judgment—"Declare them guilty, O God! Let their

intrigues be their downfall” (Psalm 5:10)—and again contrasts “the wicked” (verse 4) with “the righteous” whom God favors: “For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield” (verse 12).

Paul is making a very different point from the original intent of these psalms. In fact, he is making the opposite point—we should not cry out for God’s wrath and judgment, because we are all sinners in need of mercy.

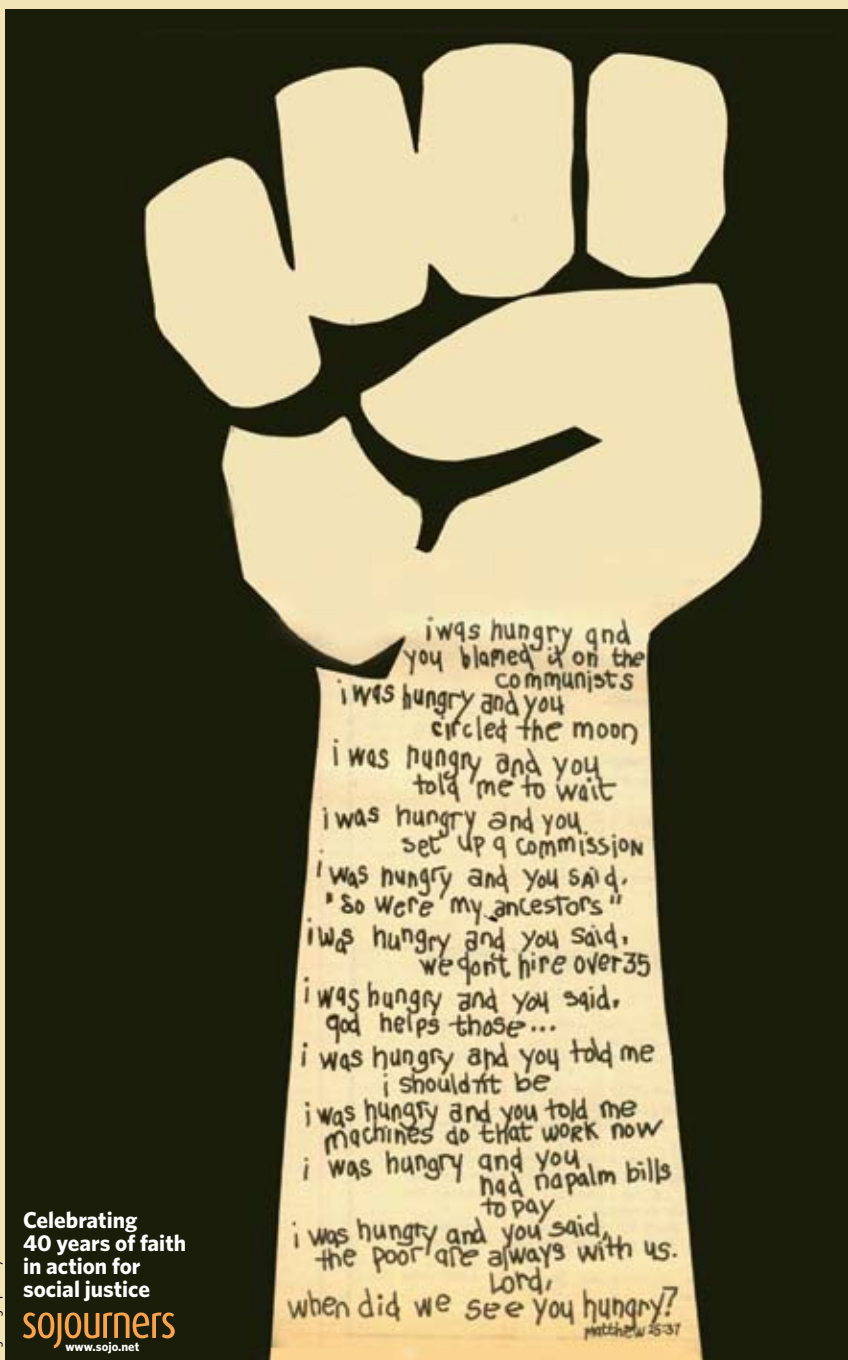
Paul’s conclusion demonstrates his awareness that he has radically changed the meaning of these passages: “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God” (Romans 3:19). In effect, Paul says: Now we know of course that this was originally said of Gentile outsiders—but really what the law says, it says to those of us on the inside. So these verses are in fact speaking to us; we are no better.

This is not a case of careless, out-of-context proof-texting. Paul has artfully and deliberately reshaped these psalms from their original cry for divine violence into a confession of universal culpability, highlighting our need for mercy.

This same pattern can be found throughout Paul’s letters. Paul is not simply finding references to Christ Jesus in Jewish scripture: He is reversing these texts to show the way of Jesus, the way of overcoming evil with good, the gospel of grace. Just as Christ Jesus has transformed and redeemed Paul, he transforms and redeems these texts, conforming them to Christ. Paul has disarmed scripture in Jesus’ name.

IT WOULD BE possible from all of this to get the impression that there are two conflicting narratives: the New Testament, which has a message of love, and the Old Testament, which promotes violence in God’s name. That conclusion is, however, far too simplistic. Of course, we do find texts in the Hebrew Bible that promote violence, but we also find those that promote mercy and compassion toward foreigners. Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann refers to these competing narratives as different “witnesses” in a court—each

Continued on Page 46



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An Amish woman sits in her horse-drawn carriage during a funeral procession for one of five Amish schoolgirls slain in 2006 in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania.

By Brittany Shoot

FORGIVE AND **FORGET?**

Contrition seems more popular than ever.

THE RITUAL, LANGUAGE, and practice of forgiveness have bled into popular culture over the last few decades in unprecedented ways. What were once private acts of contrition have become a national craze.

Themes of self-forgiveness and repenting to curb addiction and abusive behaviors are staples for recovery-themed reality shows. The *Forgive or Forget* talk show ran between 1998 and 2000, a sensationalist pop-psych frontrunner featuring feuding and estranged family members. More recently, pop culture icons and self-help gurus such as Dr. Phil have taken the place of religious counselors, offering secularized advice on confession and atonement. Oprah's grandiose apologies—those she's demanded, accepted, and even occasionally offered—are a major part of her inspirational brand. Adulterous and embezzling politicians regularly ask for forgiveness in

Chris Hondros/Getty Images

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Jason Storbakken interviews Gardner C. Taylor



Christians know that Jesus' last words on the cross were a plea that God would forgive those who crucified him. Even the Lord's Prayer includes a line about seeking forgiveness for our sins.

But does forgiveness restore us? Has the very concept of forgiveness lost meaning? Can forgiveness, now engulfed by capitalist self-help language, exist without God? Is it even necessary to forgive? For answers, it's easy to turn again to the media, to seek out

Forgiveness, as a shared act, is as much about the person seeking it as the person offering it.

the plethora of resources now dedicated to dissecting the very practice of forgiving, with or without assistance from above.

In the past two decades, forgiveness studies have emerged as an interdisciplinary academic field of inquiry, merging philosophy, psychology, law, and gender studies. Books such as Kathryn Norlock's *Forgiveness From a Feminist Perspective* offer key insights into gender bias in forgiveness narratives.

In addition, several real-life case studies offer road maps for those seeking to atone or offer forgiveness. Many are collected in Helen Whitney's documentary film, *Forgiveness: A Time to Love and A Time to Hate*. In *Forgiveness*, Whitney travels the globe interviewing penitents and forgivers. People dealing with the aftermath of random acts of violence or war are offered as meditative examples of moving on, regardless of whether forgiveness is desired or possible.

Perhaps not surprising, the most striking contemporary example of mass forgiveness happened within a community of faith. After a local man shot 10 Old Order Amish girls in their one-room schoolhouse near Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, in 2006, the grief-stricken local Amish community literally embraced the perpetrator's widow. Even more striking, the mourning families immediately declared their wholehearted forgiveness of the horrible crimes committed against their children. For many

Continued on Page 41

public—a request of their families as much as their constituents. None of this should be surprising, though. Spiritual leaders and renowned writers such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama, and Hannah Arendt have said that forgiveness is an essential aspect of everyday life.

Not long ago, forgiveness was an issue restricted to and handled by the church. Many (if not all) faiths lean heavily on the idea that we all must continually seek forgiveness. Islam and Judaism have entire holidays devoted to penance—Lailatul Qadr, or the Night of Power during Ramadan, and Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, respectively. Catholicism has long been tied to the tradition of confessing sins to a priest and asking for forgiveness.

New & Noteworthy

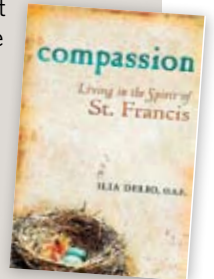
FREE SOUTH AFRICA

In the five-part documentary series *Have You Heard From Johannesburg*, filmmaker Connie Field tells the dramatic story of the many-faceted worldwide movement to end South African apartheid. Premieres on PBS's Independent Lens in January (check local listings). www.clarityfilms.org



TO LOVE MORE DEEPLY

In *Compassion: Living in the Spirit of St. Francis*, Ilia Delio, OSF, explores "what expands the human heart for another," bringing the saint's life into dialogue with the technological and cultural frenzy of modern life and encouraging a gentler way. St. Anthony Messenger Press

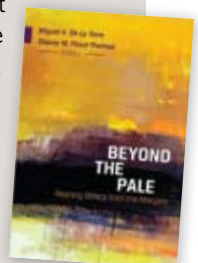


WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

Connections—Storms of Injustice: From Hurricane Katrina to Your World is a short DVD and study guide with interviews of pastors in New Orleans about how structural injustices intensify the impact of natural disaster. Encourages reflection and action. Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America

WRESTLING WITH TRADITION

Contemporary scholars introduce the issues raised when 21st century questions of race and gender are brought to bear on the work of classic ethicists and philosophers in *Beyond the Pale: Reading Ethics from the Margins*, edited by Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas and Miguel A. De La Torre. Westminster John Knox



Too Much Talk?

BY THE TIME you read this, the Occupy Wall Street campaign may have fizzled or frozen, but even so it stands as the most significant truly grassroots, outside-the-system political eruption since the Great Crash of September 2008.

Some pundits have been calling Occupy Wall Street the tea party of the Left. But that's not fair to the Occupiers. The tea party never mustered this many people for such a sustained effort, and the tea party has never been a truly independent, grassroots movement, not with former member of Congress and Big Pharma lobbyist Richard Armey pulling strings from the beginning.

The closest the Occupy movement has come to "establishment" support has been some help from organized labor. But the unions aren't really a significant part of America's power structure anymore, and the fact that they were willing to help the Occupiers shows they've finally



Reuters

the streets of Egypt in February 2011. However, if the unions ever mobilized even 10 percent of their membership for an "occupation" of the seats of power, we really would have our own Tahrir Square.

The spark for Occupy Wall Street came from Adbusters, which is, essentially, a guerilla media outfit. And on those terms the campaign has been an enormous success. A few thousand dedicated, self-sacrificing people with a lot of PR savvy have turned the head of the mainstream media colossus, and so redirected the stream of public discussion. I must admit, I wasn't sure that was still possible here in Fox News America.

But here we are. The slogan "We are the 99 percent" and the proposal for a "Robin Hood tax" on speculative trading have changed the debate. People are talking about the scandalous concentration of wealth in the U.S., and that can only lead to good things.

Also, I have to admit that it does an old guy good to see another new generation stepping up to the barricades. But it also gives me a serious case of flashback heebie-jeebies to see them recapitulating some of the self-marginalizing and self-defeating inanities of dissident generations past. And I don't just mean silly costumes at

demonstrations. I mostly mean the cumbersome, exhausting, and sometimes alienating process of consensus decision-making in which the talking continues until everyone agrees on a course of action. Take it from someone who's spent hours mired in discussions of arcane ideological minutiae: Consensus decision-making can make an old-style Senate filibuster seem purposeful and engaging.

The practice of consensus makes sense for relatively small and homogenous groups such as the Quakers, who originated it. But it is no way to run a democratic mass movement. It turns power over not to "the people," but to that tiny fraction of folks who are willing and able to sit in meetings for hours, or even days, at a time. That deals out anyone who has a life. The insistence on "leaderlessness" and rule by consensus ensures that, no matter how appealing their media strategy, Wall Street protesters will still end up preaching to the choir instead of moving the masses. Our American Spring may be coming, but I'm afraid it won't arrive until some accountable leaders and mass institutions enter the square. ■

Consensus decision-making can make an old-style Senate filibuster seem purposeful and engaging.

begun to realize that. In fact, the leaderless DIY movement in Lower Manhattan has done something the labor movement should have pulled off years ago—a mass confrontation with the plutocrats who are steering the economy toward greater deindustrialization and inequality.

The unions are famously in decline, but they still have more than 14 million dues-paying members, and that dwarfs every other social force in the U.S. The Occupy Wall Street website proclaims the movement's kinship with the revolutionary tactics of the Arab Spring. But the Occupy movement lacks the organic connection to the mainstream population that animated



Danny Duncan Collum teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort. Find out about his novel *White Boy* and more at www.dannyduncancollum.net.

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unaccustomed to the Amish way of life, it was a shocking display of tolerance and even love.

In the film *Forgiveness*, one expert weighs in that because the Amish routinely give up so many other aspects of their independence—higher education, individualism—the act of giving up on resentment comes somewhat naturally. “Forgiveness is about giving up,” says author David Weaver-Zercher. “It’s about giving up one’s right to revenge and eventually giving up on the anger one naturally feels.” But forgiveness doesn’t have to mean giving up grief.



Helen Whitney, producer of *Forgiveness: A Time to Love and a Time to Hate*.

Can forgiveness, now engulfed by capitalist self-help language, exist without God?

“I think we can only talk about forgiveness if we talk about the existence of evil,” says Terri Jentz, author of the chilling memoir *Strange Piece of Paradise* and another subject of the film. Jentz was barely 20 when she was brutally assaulted by an unknown man with an ax while she and a friend camped at a remote site in Oregon. Jentz explains that she faced her own inability to forgive by acknowledging the presence of true evil in this world. For her, it is possible to understand that some forgiveness can never be offered. True evil like that which she experienced cannot be redressed, and forgiving an unrepentant assailant is futile.

On the atonement side of forgiveness



Kevin Spacey in *Margin Call*.

POWER AND NO GLORY

ROLAND EMMERICH is known for making the kind of disaster movies that fans of quality filmmaking—the kind with literate scripts, acting that’s not just phoning it in for a Mulholland Drive mortgage payment, and values that approach the humane—love to hate. His films also garner massive audiences. Ask yourself what you were doing on the weekends that *Independence Day* and *Godzilla* were released and you may know why.

But look beneath the surface and there’s a more thoughtful sensibility at work. *The Day After Tomorrow* engaged climate change without easy solutions, and *2012* proposed that salvation for the U.S. will only come from accepting its interdependence with other nations. Emmerich is German, and it’s obvious that his outsider status permits him to raise an eyebrow at cinematic U.S. imperialism.

It’s refreshing to see him turn the eye beneath that brow to a European story in *Anonymous*, a fantasy that purports to be about whether or not Shakespeare really wrote his plays. Emmerich is having smart fun and so are we. The film takes the debatable authorship theory at face value, so don’t expect a credible laying out of the evidence. What you get instead is a fascinating hybrid movie: a cloak-and-dagger-historical fiction-Greek tragedy-inspirational comedy about how storytellers can change society. It’s bombastic and implausible and full of bad Elizabethan teeth and people who would only say “thou” and “thee” given half the chance. But in its imagining of the power of art to create a new way of thinking about

the world, *Anonymous* ends up being the inversion of the disaster movie: It’s a glorious—if slightly ridiculous—evocation of the artist’s vocation to tell the truth whatever it costs.

Costs are also at the dark heart of **Margin Call**, the first whole dramatic treatment of the roots of the 2008 economic crisis. Powerhouse actors including Jeremy Irons, Demi Moore, Kevin Spacey, and Zachary Quinto portray the process by which one investment firm could both save itself and destroy everyone else by lying about the value of its holdings and selling them before the word gets out. What’s most disturbing about this film is not the amorality of its protagonists—we’ve been used to demonized caricatures of Wall Street since Michael Douglas made “greed is good” a mantra. It’s the speed with which the decisions are made that will have Emmerich-esque consequences for the rest of the world. *Margin Call*’s clear focus on a bunch of individuals sitting round a board room table at 2 a.m., playing dice with the lives of others, is the most striking cinematic representation yet of a theme also found in *Anonymous*: how power becomes concentrated in the hands of far too few. In this sense, while these two films are set in worlds that are unreachable to most of us, they force us to ask questions that have to be faced, right here, right now. ■

Gareth Higgins is a Sojourners contributing editor and executive director of the Wild Goose Festival. Originally from Northern Ireland, he lives in Durham, North Carolina.

are people such as Kathy Power. An anti-war activist involved in a 1970 robbery that resulted in the murder of a Boston police officer, Power was on the lam for 23 years before she surrendered to the authorities. In the aftermath of her trial and conviction, Power realized the true nature of the harm her crime had caused. Moreover, she truly feared that her sins were beyond any measure of penance. “The really deep work that I had to do as a penitent was to keep peeling back these layers of defensiveness—the fearfulness that I would be unforgivable,” she explains.

On a much larger scale, *Forgiveness* also explores entire nations ripped apart by incomprehensible violence and saddled with a legacy of atonement, forgiveness, and reconciliation. While war is certainly an area rich for discussion about the nature of atonement and forgiveness, filmmaker Whitney focuses on nations’ internal conflicts and civil wars, such as those in Rwanda and Germany.

Since the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the nation has struggled to reconcile its once-divided and still deeply wounded people. The Rwandan government promotes reconciliation, but one has to wonder how such large-scale forgiveness is conceivable without some measure of justice—and what could resemble justice in the aftermath of such brutal horror?

One advantage is that as an overwhelmingly Christian nation, surviving Rwandans have access to evangelical forgiveness training. Profiled in *Forgiveness*, friends Celestin (a Tutsi) and Elie (a Hutu) explain how their spiritual training taught them the importance of reconciliation despite their obvious differences. Though Elie had killed a number of Celestin’s family members, they both speak about being radically transformed by forgiving one another. They have become friends but also work together. When Celestin got married, Elie was his best man. To many who carry grudges, that sort of generosity of spirit is unthinkable. But Celestin and Elie seem to think little of it.

The most obvious example for Rwandans to follow on their collective penitential journey is found in Germany. No other country in the world spends the kind of resources that Germans do on commemorating their own horrific legacy of unspeakable acts. Because Germany is also decades removed from the

Holocaust, its people provide an interesting road map in coming to terms with evil, acknowledging suffering, asking for forgiveness, and doing penance. Germany is also an interesting case study in the necessity of keeping alive terrible memories so that younger generations never forget history and never repeat it.

“One of the great important things about forgiveness is that it is not excuse,” Donald Shriver explains in the film. “Forgiveness involves the facing of an evil and then asking whether or not, out of the facing of it, some reconciliation is still possible,” the theologian says.

Depending on who you ask, offering forgiveness simply because it is requested can be too much. Forgiveness, as a shared

act, is as much about the person seeking it as the person offering it. While the church has long ago been forced to relinquish control over the dominant forgiveness narrative in our culture, it is worth considering how the ritual language of apology and forgiveness has changed very little from when Jesus asked God to pardon those who crucified him. Throughout time, forgiveness has been about vulnerability, about laying one’s soul bare for another to judge. Perhaps especially those of us who remain unforgiven for past sins can be among the first to consider how offering our own forgiveness can benefit others as well as ourselves. ■

Brittany Shoot is a writer living in San Francisco.

Reviewed by C. Christopher Smith

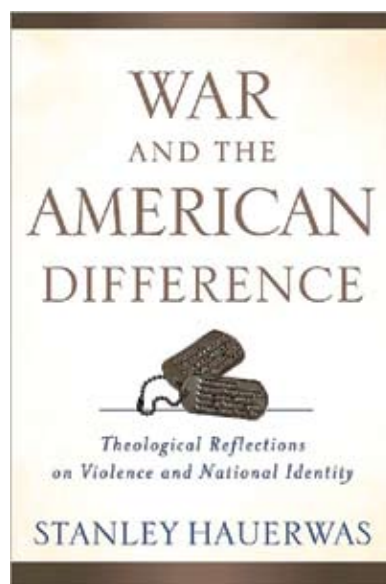
LOCAL CHURCH AS RADICAL WITNESS

War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity, by Stanley Hauerwas. Baker Academic.

STANLEY HAUERWAS’ new book *War and the American Difference* is not the first volume that he has written on the theme of war, but it’s the first one he’s released post-9/11. Although the Duke Divinity School professor frequently writes on topics of war, peace, and violence, this new volume is perhaps his clearest account to date of the church’s witness in a violent world. Like most of Hauerwas’ previous work, this new collection of essays is not for the faint of heart—or mind. Although the reading gets somewhat dense at times, it is ultimately rewarding, a beacon of Christ’s peace in an age of endless war.

Readers who are familiar with Hauerwas’ work might be tempted to put down the book after the first few essays, which rehash themes that have characterized his work for more than a quarter-century. In these early chapters, Hauerwas explores thorny questions such as the nature of “America’s

God” and why war is a “moral necessity” for the United States, peppering his writing with provocative statements such as “America is an extraordinarily wealthy society, determined to remain so even if it requires our domination of the rest of the world.”



Although the first of the book’s three parts reiterates familiar themes, Hauerwas begins to take a new and intriguing turn in its second part. In the essay “Sacrificing the Sacrifices of War,” Hauerwas uses Lt. Col. Dave Grossman’s research on soldiers’ resistance to killing in combat to bolster his argument that “the greatest sacrifice of war is not the sacrifice of life, great as such a sacrifice may be, but rather the sacrifice of our unwill-

ingness to kill.” We were made not to kill, but to be in communion, and through the death and resurrection of Jesus war and killing have been rendered unnecessary. In

this part of the book, Hauerwas also offers keen reflections on the anti-pacifist work of C.S. Lewis, a piece that will be of interest—and challenging—to the many evangelical fans of Lewis' work, and on the nonviolent resistance of Martin Luther King Jr., which he argues was not incompatible with John Howard Yoder's concept of "pacifism of the messianic community."

It is the book's third part, however, that makes this work excel. In this final section, Hauerwas turns to reflecting on the question of what it might look like for the church to be the church, a culture that embodies an alternative to war. Hauerwas has, of course, emphasized this point in his work over the last several decades, but what is different here is that the direction he points us is decidedly local and particular in a way that has previously only been alluded to in his work. Perhaps the finest essay in the whole collection is "A Particular Place," in which he channels both Wendell Berry and his theological muse John Howard Yoder in emphasizing that our response to the violence of Constantinianism should not be anti-Constantinianism, but rather faithfulness in church communities defined by "locality and place." He continues in the same vein in the book's final essay, in which he argues that although the church is called to be everywhere, it does so in a way that is attentive to the particularities of each place in which it gathers.

I have long appreciated that Hauerwas' work cuts across the grain of the violence of our times, but what makes *War and The American Difference* extraordinary is its insistence that the different way of Christ is embodied primarily not in the White House, the halls of Congress, or even in the church in the universal and abstract sense, but rather in our local and particular church communities that embody Christ's reconciliation in the contours of our daily life together. Indeed, Hauerwas' message here of God's grassroots transformation of our violent world is one of hope and one whose peaceful means befit its ends! ■

C. Christopher Smith is editor of The Englewood Review of Books (EnglewoodReview.org) and is presently co-writing a book titled *Slow Church* (forthcoming from IVP Books).

Reviewed by Robert Hirschfield

PRAYER, POETRY, POLITICS

Orange Alert: Essays on Poetry, Art, and the Architecture of Silence. University of Michigan Press. Fasting for Ramadan: Notes from a Spiritual Practice. Tupelo Press. Both by Kazim Ali.

READING KAZIM ALI, one is reminded in a way of James Baldwin, whose book *The Fire Next Time* defined and is intertwined with the civil rights struggle during the mid-'60s. Ali is a Muslim-American poet, essayist, and novelist whose two most recent books similarly will be invaluable to those wanting to know what it means to be Muslim in post-9/11 America.

Ali writes in his "Poetry Is Dangerous" piece in *Orange Alert*, a book of literary and political essays, of arousing the suspicion of an ROTC man at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania while innocently disposing of poems from a poetry contest he was judging. The son of Indian Muslims, his



contemplate happiness, or its opposite, or to explore the mystery of Hajira (Hagar) looking for water in the desert. ("What was she thinking?" he writes.)

Rooted in Islam, he confounds the stereotypes of an absolutist Islam held by many. He says that the revered Sufi poet Rumi saw no distinction between the destroyed temple of Solomon and the mosque built in its place. His descriptions of eating after a fast, and

the mind's restlessness during a fast, are noted with the bare Zenlike precision that insists you look at the moment itself, its beauty and singularity. (This quality transforms his essay on the poet Jane Cooper in *Orange Alert* into a work of almost sacred perception, in which

"It was poetry, I kept insisting to the state policeman who was questioning me on the phone," Ali writes.

"Middle Eastern" appearance was cited, and the police were brought in. He was told that in the "current climate" (the year was 2007, and America was on "orange alert") he had to be careful about his behavior.

"It was poetry, I kept insisting to the state policeman who was questioning me on the phone," Ali writes. "It was poetry I was putting out to be recycled."

Even in *Fasting for Ramadan*, Ali's spiritual journal of insights, associations, and revelations jotted down during the 30-day fast, his mind cannot escape menace. He mentions the orange peeled and eaten in the morning, and the sunset, also orange, seen in the evening. That leads to his reflecting: "Orange alert means now is the time for creative expression, for flowering; now is the time, more than any other, to eschew practices of exhaustion and death and turn toward our interior sources of love and light."

Ali is a contemplative writer happy to

the arc of a career is secondary to the light of being.)

When he turns to scriptural mystery, it is with lines like this: "Craig tells me the word for 'one' in Arabic is 'wahid,' the word for loneliness, 'waheed.'"

Ali admits in *Fasting* to having a "hard time" with prayer, as he wants to believe God will see him when he prays, but since he is not sure of God's nature, he is also not sure how he can speak to God.

In the essay "Poetry and Silence" in *Orange Alert*, he transfers this state to the very nature of creativity:

As I think about my own ideas about poetry and art, I notice how often I have swerved away from actual content—in either poetry, music, or dance—and toward the idea of "silence": Rothko's monochrome fields, Martin's white fields, the stillness of butoh. In poetry, I lean toward the small, the

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CultureWatch

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fraught, the nearly silent.

In the world, Ali plays the role of a post-9/11 Josef K (the protagonist of Franz Kafka's dystopian novel *The Trial*) who knows exactly what his crime is, writing in *Orange Alert*: "My body exists politically in a way I cannot prevent." ■

Robert Hirschfield is a New York City-based freelance writer.

Interview by Jason Storbakken

SEEING THINGS THROUGH

Activist pastor Gardner C. Taylor on lessons learned in a long life of faithfully taking the side of the oppressed.

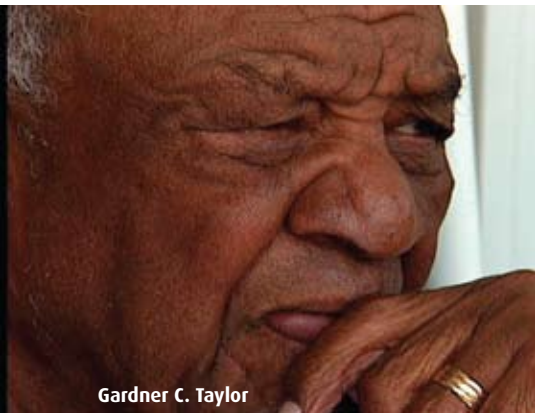
PASTOR AND CIVIL rights activist Gardner C. Taylor has influenced a nation, providing counsel to presidents and leading a movement. Alongside Martin Luther King Jr. and others, he helped establish the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) and served as its second president. In 2011, the PNBC celebrated its 50th year.

For 42 years, Taylor served as the senior pastor of the historic Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, New York. The cross street where I live in Brooklyn is named after this iconic man of God. He is 93 years old and still bearing abundant fruit. His most recent book, *Faith in the Fire*, is a collection of reflections and stories gleaned from his last 60 years in ministry.

Jason Storbakken: You were pastor of Concord Baptist Church of Christ for more than 40 years. That's unusual today, when so many move on after three or four years.

Gardner C. Taylor: I think there is a restlessness on the part of pastors and on the part of congregations. They do not seem to be able to settle down for the long haul. It is very important for the pastor to come to know the people and understand the goals and purposes of the people and how they plan to get there. It takes time to learn all of that.

We have many identities—ethnicity, nationality, gender. How should our



Gardner C. Taylor

"The job of intelligent people is to discern what is going on and take the side of those who are oppressed."

Religion & Ethics Newsweekly

shared identity in Christ affect our life?

If we understand the dimensions of our identification with Jesus Christ, it gives us a balance and a sense of purpose and the determination to see things through.

You have been called one of the greatest preachers in the English language. What advice would you give to new preachers so that they too may "see things through"?

First, to root himself or herself in both the scriptures and in circumstances around them. I think many of our younger preachers have abandoned their basis in scripture or, to the other extreme, have become exclusively scripture-bound—both of which I think are bad. We need to have the scripture and we need to be employed by the scripture in the community.

What would you say to the seasoned preachers who've been ministering for many years?

They need to see that the times are changing and have changed, and they need to adjust themselves to the new situation. Things are not what they were, nor should they be.

The other day I went down to Occupy Wall Street ... Good. Good.

Most of the people there are young and white. They seem to be part of the "new poor." How do we engage those who have been on the margins for much longer? There is a need to train, educate, and

propagandize people to know that their situation of poverty is not necessarily permanent—there are possible ways out of it. And they need to participate in those movements that are aimed at redeeming the situation of poverty. People need to be stimulated and need to see possible purpose and possible goals and advantages to them.

What are your feelings regarding the movement for gay and lesbian rights, particularly within the church? The gay and lesbian community is with us. Always was, and it is pronouncedly with us now.

They have to be included in our community. Their sexual orientation needs to be respected. We need to move forward.

What advice do you give to young Christian activists in the 21st century?

To acquaint oneself with what is happening, why it's happening, what is the purpose, and how they can participate in advancing the cause of a better community. That comes by conversation—the classroom is well and good, but the job is to get into it. Be active. Passivity will not help us.

What is an important lesson you've learned as a pastor, preacher, and civil rights leader?

To know what is happening and to participate on the right side of what is happening. The job of intelligent people is to discern what is going on and take the side of those who are oppressed.

You recently published *Faith in the Fire*, and the PNBC just celebrated its 50th anniversary. What next?

Well, I'm 93 years old. There's not much next for me. [Laughs.] What's next for me is to see the younger people meet the issues of their time constructively. ■

Jason Storbakken is cofounder, with his wife, Vonetta, of the Radical Living Christian community in Brooklyn, New York, and chapel director of the Bowery Mission.

Poisoning Eden

Continued from Page 29

everyone fish, so they will forget how to fish for themselves and depend on us for food." The fact is, this is a place where people still know how to fish; you don't have to give them fish or teach them to fish. They'll be just fine if you just let them fish, which means not pouring poison into the river. More to the point, those of us concerned for people's welfare need to make sure other people don't pour poison into the river.

Watching Padre David, I realize that the "preferential option for the poor," the deep-seated spiritual commitment to care for those most overlooked, is reaching a historical turning point. As industrial civilization hurtles toward ecological collapse, to care for those most overlooked in places like this does not require charity, a redistribution of wealth, or finding ways to provide for those ravaged by systemic poverty. Instead, it requires siding with the most vulnerable in defense of the land that sustains them.

What these people need from us directly is ... nothing. All we have to do is ensure that their land is not poisoning them. But "not poisoning them" is harder than one imagines.

Neither you nor I is physically dynamiting mountains or pouring cyanide into the groundwater, and it's delusional to think we can shop our way out of this by not purchasing silver jewelry, or by any other "personal change" solutions that still operate within the framework of consumption and capitalism. "Not poisoning them" means nothing less than dismantling the foundations of the modern consumer society. It means understanding that the differences between them and us will not be apparent for much longer. Sooner or later, it won't matter where you are in the hierarchy of an unjust social system. When the system has eaten away the very ground it rests on, all of us will find ourselves with the short end of the stick.

If civilization careens off the cliff of unsustainable consumption, the crash will be painful and dangerous. We are nostalgic for far-off places on the periphery because they are our best hope for rediscovering our relationship to the great mystery of earth and spirit that sustains us. Before long we'll be asking people like the Mapuche to teach us to fish. ■

Denali DeGraf is a photographer, lute-maker, and radio journalist based in the Andes mountains of Patagonia, Argentina.

Catherine Rowan

Bio: Consultant for member organizations of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility. *Website:* www.iccr.org



1 How have your experiences as a Catholic Maryknoll lay missionary shaped you? They have had a profound effect. My family lived in Brazil from 1988 to 1994—years when Brazil was subject to the “structural adjustment” programs of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. My oldest son, who was 8 years old at the time, got it right away. After a few months living in São Paulo, he said: “Brazil has so much. Why do they have to keep sending their wealth out of the country?”

2 What are justice issues you’re working on now? We’ve all seen how unregulated banking can devastate people’s livelihoods. Inspired by our faith traditions, members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) are working for an open, well-regulated global financial system that serves the needs of all—one in which banks are accountable for the risk from their business activities. We’re putting forth a shareholder proposal calling for transparency to prevent companies from dressing up their balance sheets to hide liquidity problems that could increase system-wide risk.

We’re also using our shareholder power to work with community groups to pressure Bank of America and Wells Fargo to reform their mortgage modification practices and invest in communities devastated by foreclosures.

3 What are your next big priorities? With so many people in the U.S. unable to afford the medicines they need, I have been working with other ICCR members to

press pharmaceutical companies about drug price increases. Increasing access to medicines is critical to preventing millions of deaths around the world. We believe companies need to find a balance between seeking profits and the moral mandate to meet public health needs.

ICCR has identified food and water as the two priority areas—for example, the impact of corporations’ water use on communities in areas of water scarcity. We are also paying a lot of attention to excessive speculation in food commodities—its role in increasing the price of food. Banks have been profiting handsomely from trading in these markets. Meanwhile, millions of people on the planet cannot afford to eat.

4 What gives you hope? There are so many people raising questions and seeking alternatives to the economic system we live in now. There is great interest in micro-finance, credit unions, cooperatives, and community-supported agriculture. A number of companies are moving to see ecological sustainability and corporate responsibility as key elements of their businesses.

5 What’s one piece of spiritual economic perspective you’d like to share? Well, this is a big one: Economist Joseph Stiglitz says that the legacy of this economic crisis will be a great debate of ideas. I think it is a spiritual task to struggle with questions such as what and who we place at the center of our economy, and what needs to be done to have a sustainable future on our planet for our children and grandchildren.

—Interview by Elizabeth Palmberg

The Way of Peace and Grace

Continued from Page 37

claiming to be the correct view, each claiming authority.

We see, for example, the narrative demanding unquestioning obedience to God exemplified in the genocide command of 1 Samuel 15, but elsewhere we see the opposite: Over and over, we see the heroes of the Hebrew Bible disputing, lamenting, and questioning divine-sanctioned violence. This narrative of protest can be seen in Abraham’s challenge, “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25), and also in Moses’ pleading for God not to act in violence against Israel (Exodus 32:7–14). We see such protest throughout the psalms and prophets as well.

Questioning is also a typical characteristic of Jewish exegesis, exemplified by the rabbinical debate found in the Talmud. In fact, the very name “Israel” means “wrestles with God.” So a transformational reading of scripture that faithfully challenges violence in God’s name is not only characteristic of Paul’s epistles and other New Testament use of the Hebrew Bible: It is also a deeply Jewish way to read scripture.

Paul’s conversion from religious violence to the way of grace in Christ became the interpretive lens through which he subsequently read all of scripture. This enabled him to sort through the Hebrew Bible’s competing narratives, rejecting the way of violence he had formerly held, and zeroing in on the scriptures that pointed to God’s grace revealed in Christ.

If we wish as Christians to adopt Paul’s way of interpreting scripture, then we need to learn to read our Bibles with that same grace-shaped focus. This is not a matter of picking and choosing which verses one likes, but rather of coming to have the mind of Christ—spending time with Jesus, and growing to care about the things he cares about. Through this relational formation—not only studying the words of Jesus, but living them—we learn to recognize what reflects Christ and Jesus’ way of cruciform love.

To those of us who have found ourselves troubled by divine-sanctioned violence in the Bible, this is good news. Wrestling with scripture in this way may not be an expression of doubt at all, but an act of faithfulness—both to scripture and to the God revealed in Christ Jesus that it points to (Romans 10:4). ■

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The Freedom to Choose Life

THERE IS SO much life for us to enter into now that Christ is born. Our baptism into the life of Christ means that we inhabit a world of new beginnings. God is always seeking to communicate with us. Discernment is an essential part of hearing and receiving God's words. The voice of God is full of power, but God does not force God's self upon us. Rather we have to decide how we use the freedom God offers us. The triune God, who created order from chaos in the beginning, still desires to form us, to overturn our understanding of freedom and order.

We cannot escape God's knowledge of us. This is cause for both thanksgiving and awesome trembling. It's also an invitation to seek to know God as intimately as we are known by God. The basis of knowing God is love. As we grow in our ability to love God, our capacity for learning how to love others also expands. The Holy Spirit helps us recognize the communal nature of God's love and call. How we live our lives affects those around us. The degree to which we seek to know and love one another is the degree to which we will understand this truth. The



chaos in our world seems to call forth self-appointed prophets proclaiming doomsday and telling us "the time is at hand." The specific prophecies might be wrong, but it is true that the time's at hand. It is always the time to turn and freely choose new life in Christ.

Enuma Okoro, of Durham, North Carolina, is the author of Reluctant Pilgrim and co-author of Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals.

[JANUARY 1]

Is That It?

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

IT'S A BIT anti-climatic, isn't it? The day after Christmas always is. We spend weeks preparing and anticipating that Christmas is all we've cracked it up to be. Sometimes the entire family *does* get along for that one day, and it's beautiful. Sometimes we get what we hoped for and we even manage to give the right gifts. But then this odd thing happens. That for which we longed, secretly or openly, soon begins to lose its desired effect on us. After a few days, the new dress is not as perfect as we remembered it. In the days after Christmas, we begin to feel unsatisfied again.

These readings speak with conviction and promise into the still-hollow spaces of our lives. The Christ child is born—but that is not the end of the story. Like those whom the prophet addresses in Isaiah 61, we too continue to wait in hope for the full redemption of God. We can rejoice in hope in the Incarnation because we too are offered a new covering. Life in Christ is our garment of salvation. It may seem like nothing lasting has happened at Christmas because of how much we still struggle to live as though what Simeon

and Anna proclaimed makes a difference to us: "A light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:32).

These faithful elders, Anna and Simeon, take us back to Isaiah, to the faith of those who waited. They also point us toward the fullness of God's work. We do not wait in vain. Nor do we hunger in vain. Christmas actually does matter, beyond what we might imagine. If we let it, our relationship with Christ changes everything.

[JANUARY 8]

Order Out of Chaos

Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11

THERE IS A sense in which our baptism in Christ is making divine order out of the chaos of our lives. Like the Spirit hovering over creation in Genesis 1, the baptism by the Holy Spirit creates new life where there had been darkness, where there had been separation from God. The Genesis creation story is so

powerful and beautiful because it reminds us of God's ability and desire to create—and to continue creating. God is a God of life, light, and new beginnings. God holds immeasurable power in God's voice alone, as the psalmist proclaims (Psalm 29). If the word of God alone can effect new creation, imagine what the entire being of God, the God who becomes incarnate in Christ Jesus, might do with that creation.

God invites us deeper into the sacred narrative. Part of that story includes recognizing the ways in which God continues to communicate with us. In the Incarnation, we have a God who chooses to communicate as our brother, fellow sojourner, and resurrected savior. In baptism, such as that which Jesus receives in Mark 1:4-11, we have a God who chooses to communicate by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If we welcome God's communion with us, then it makes a deeper call on our vocations as disciples and witnesses to God's reign. The Israelites recalled God's ways and words during the exilic and post-exilic periods. The Jews and Gentiles in Jesus' time could look at Jesus and accept the invitation to live differently, regardless of what they saw and experienced under Roman rule. It has to be the same for us today. For Christ to create order out of the chaos of our lives, then our baptism, our recognition of the power of the Holy Spirit, has to make a difference in how we live day by day (Acts 19:1-7).

[JANUARY 15]

Formed in Freedom

1 Samuel 3:1-20; Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51

IT TAKES TWO to tango. It's not any different when our partner happens to be the God of creation. These scriptures speak to the relationship that exists between us and God. Whether we like it or not, God fully knows us—each one, and collectively. According to the psalmist, God knew us before we were born (Psalm 139). There is nowhere we can hide from God. This should give us comfort and evoke our praise of God as it did Nathanael's in John 1. But it's no surprise if it also causes us a little panic. Eli probably experienced a little panic himself when God told Samuel how much God knew about the actions of Eli's sons and Eli's passive role in it

(1 Samuel 3:1-20). God knows us through and through and yet, in Christ, God does not force us to seek to know God back. It is always an invitation and an inexhaustible one to be sure. This is the difference between being enslaved and being free.

When God reveals God's self to Samuel, to Nathanael, and to us, we have the freedom to respond as we see fit. If our communities have done a good job of forming us, so that we can recognize God when we see God, then there is a better chance we will respond favorably. If, on the other hand, we have chosen to use our freedom to believe in whatever works in our best interest (1 Corinthians 6:12-20), then the chances of accepting the invitation to "come and see" God are slim. What are we being taught to do with our freedom in Christ? How are we forming others to understand that freedom?

[JANUARY 22]

It's Time, All Right

Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Psalm 62:5-12;
1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20

JOHN THE BAPTIST has just been arrested. He's not getting out of that alive. Nineveh is on the verge of divine destruction. Paul is telling everyone to forget about life as we know it because the things of this world are not the real issue. The psalmist says that not even wealth (by whatever means we manage to accrue it) can save us. It's pretty bleak for the season in which we are supposed to be celebrating Christ's revelation to the world. The time is at hand, no doubt. *Kairos*, God's time, is always at hand. But this doesn't mean we are to abandon all hope. Rather we should pay attention and get busy living the way we are called to live as faithful disciples.

Jesus tells us to turn from our old life and embrace the new one he has to offer. In Pauline ethics this means all our ways of living should be oriented toward glorifying God. Whatever distracts us from seeking justice, loving our neighbors, caring for the destitute, and turning the world upside down so it looks right-side up from God's perspective, is what we should all be about. The time is at hand, but that time is God's time. God's time always seems to effect mercy and grace, pardon and second chances, even if this troubles

and offends some of us as it did Jonah (Jonah 3:1-5, 10). Thankfully power and steadfast love belong to God (Psalm 62:11-12). So no matter how dire and desperate things may seem in our world, God's time is still at hand and we are still invited to be a part of God's work.

[JANUARY 29]

Freedom and Obedience

Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111;
1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28

IN GOD'S COMMUNITY freedom and obedience are never about only the individual. In the world's mindset those two words do not even make sense together. Society teaches us that inherently freedom means not having to answer to anyone or even consider how our words (and possibly actions) affect others. Our scriptures suggest that the words we choose to speak matter a great deal and the freedom God offers us in Christ is never disconnected from how we live in community. Psalm 111 is an apt reminder of the communal nature of praise, thanksgiving, witness, and trust. In fact, the faithfulness of our words is directly linked to how we understand freedom in Christ and whether we know and care for those in our community.

That prophets should come from among their own people (Deuteronomy 18:18) is a beautiful testimony to the importance of knowing the people to which we imagine we are called to witness. If we took this lesson to heart, how might it affect the way we think about engaging with governments and citizens of other nations? Christ calls us to speak out of love (1 Corinthians 8:1). People willing to speak on God's behalf are a dime a dozen, just like in ancient times. But the true word of God is still rare, just like in ancient times. Before we claim to speak or act on God's behalf, we should remember that we answer to God as well. There is only One who can speak without reservation into our lives (Mark 1:25). We offer the love of Christ in obedience and humility. ■

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1. Title of Publication: Sojourners. 2. Publication No: 0364-2097. 3. Date of filing: October 6, 2011. 4. Frequency of issue: Monthly (Sept-Oct combined). 5. Number of issues published annually: Eleven. 6. Annual subscription price: \$39.95. 7. Location of known office of publication: 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. 8. Location of headquarters or general business offices of the publishers: Same. 9. Names and complete address of publisher and editor: Publisher—Syieda Penn, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Editor—James D. Rice, same address. 10. Owner: Sojourners, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. 11. Known bondholders, mortgages, and other securities: None. 12. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding 12 months. 13. Publication title: Sojourners. 14. Issue date for circulation data below: November 2011. 15. Extent and nature of circulation: paid subscriptions, U.S. and international, newsstand and single copy sales. The average number of copies of each issue during the preceding 12 months: A. Total number of copies printed (net press run)—32,186. B.1. Paid and/or requested circulation: Outside-county mail subscriptions including advertiser's proof and exchange copies—28,981. B.2. Paid in-county subscriptions—0. B.3. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-USPS paid distribution—296. B.4. Other classes mailed through the USPS—105. C. Total paid distribution—29,111. D.1. Free distribution by mail: Outside-county—0. D.2. In-county—0. D.3. Other classes mailed through the USPS—575. D.4. Free distribution outside the mail—746. E. Total free distribution—1,321. F. Total distribution: 30,704. G. Copies not distributed—1,470. H. Total—32,174. The actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: A. 31,424. B.1. 28,650. B.2. 0. B.3. 358. B.4. 103. C. 29,382. D.1. 0. D.2. 0. D.3. 566. D.4. 370. E. 936. F. 30,047. G. 1,377. H. 31,424. 16. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Syieda Penn, Publisher.



Do Superheroes Get the Flu?

MY DREAM OF being the vanguard of a new super race of elderly came to an end recently when I spent a week in bed with bronchitis.

I had been preparing for my new role by carefully watching instructive documentaries on two of our greatest citizens, Captain America, a hero whose muscles are swollen with patriotism, and the Green Lantern, a man empowered by a secret alien force that controls the universe, like the Koch brothers, only with better

instead, I asked myself entrepreneurially. Unfortunately, since I'm not a rich job creator, I couldn't move forward with the idea. Plus, my friends told me it was gross.

AT FIRST, I thought I had the flu, because I didn't get a flu shot this year and naturally had to be punished by the medical community. Doctors are not happy when you don't get your flu shot because, in their minds, you've been warned. After all, every elevator

the nurse who will be VERY disappointed in him if he doesn't.)

Actually, the latest studies show that flu shots are only effective 60 percent of the time. That sounds pretty close to 50-50 to me, and they say you only have a 30 percent chance of getting the flu if you don't get the shot. So I'm doing the math here, and what I come up with is, uhm, 12.

The good news is, when I first got sick the doctor only used the phrase "people your age" twice, which I thought was nice of him.

I anticipated more of this kind of talk, since when he walked in he looked to be the age of somebody who should be being dropped off at soccer practice by his mom. I had expected the reassuring sight of a genial, silver-haired practitioner much older and wiser than me, the kind of doctor that, given contemporary actuarial tables for my generation, isn't alive any more.

This was only the latest indignity of aging. The other day I noticed that a spouse—who shall remain nameless—had recently consolidated our family records system, creating a new folder labeled "Ed's Medical/ Also Cats." I found this troubling at first, but then remembered that our veterinarian never once nagged me about the flu. Which reminds me: I need to have him check out the life forms living in my sleeve. They might need shots. ■

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of Sojourners.

Naturally, I had to be punished by the medical community.

special effects. These two superheroes are using their powers to fight evil, such as job-killing regulations that are stifling American business innovation.

Speaking of which, I've been thinking of inventing a disposable shirt sleeve for people who, like me, have recently spent the last month coughing into their elbows. This is the doctor-recommended technique for controlling your germs (as opposed to my preferred method of coughing out the window of a speeding car, although you really have to get the angle right). But after a while, your target sleeve starts developing its own ecosystem, supporting life forms more typical of, say, a rainforest. I didn't mind the moss, and the ferns were kind of pretty, but when an equatorial lemur started crawling up my shoulder I thought it might be time to change sweaters. But why not slip on a new disposable arm sleeve

and hallway at my HMO has posters promoting flu shots, and the waiting room TVs have videos that repeatedly promote new experimental ideas such as "taking care of yourself." But my hesitancy has always been because previous flu shots gave me a mild case of the flu. This has always confused me.

Polio vaccines, after all, don't give you a mild case of polio. You don't get a touch of tetanus when you get that shot. Immunization for rubella? "Well, you may experience some mild symptoms, but the blindness should be temporary." Do you understand where I'm going with this? Our president says that perfection should not be the enemy of the good, but I don't think it's too much to ask of flu shots that they don't make you sick. (Our president has his own problems, of course, such as deciding where one-term presidents get their flu shots and what to say to



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